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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Extraordinary session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 448th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 28 May 1990, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Dannenbring (Federal Republic of Germany)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION (item 1 of the provisional agenda)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that the extraordinary session had been convened in accordance with a decision of the fortieth session of the Executive Committee, in October 1989.

2. He welcomed, on behalf of the Executive Committee, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Deputy High Commissioner, who were participating for the first time in a formal meeting of the Executive Committee. He wished them success and pledged the Executive Committee's co-operation. He also welcomed Namibia to the extraordinary session of the Executive Committee. He expressed the hope that the spirit of Berlin would prevail globally and that the walls that divided people would be broken down peacefully. Fundamental political changes had already occurred in Europe, and democratic changes had taken place in Africa, Asia and Latin America; he expected those developments to enhance international solidarity and ease the plight of the millions of refugees throughout the world.

3. The extraordinary session was required to address the issues considered by the Temporary Working Group established to review UNHCR's General Programmes and other assistance activities. By adopting the report of the Temporary Working Group (A/AC.96/742) and authorizing the budget targeted for the year, the extraordinary session would have important ramifications on the future work of the Executive Committee and of the UNHCR. He hoped that lasting humanitarian solutions would be found while ensuring that basic needs were met and that fundamental principles were respected.

4. He was confident that a spirit of compromise would prevail in the deliberations on agenda items 4 and 5. Since last autumn, there had been no improvement in the UNHCR budgetary situation, and he referred to the High Commissioner's letter of 14 March 1990 informing Governments of the great difficulties in reconciling total programme requirements and expected income and to his own letter, on behalf of the Executive Committee, drawing attention to the financial situation and to the fact that the financial crisis continued unabated. He felt it important to stress that while the Executive Committee was being asked to consider the General Programmes, it should be remembered that important special programmes had not been funded or had been under-funded. The previous session of the Executive Committee had also decided on other exercises, including, inter alia, the convening of an open-ended working group of members of the Executive Committee to examine protection and solutions in a coherent and comprehensive manner, bearing in mind the mandate of the High Commissioner. He was confident that UNHCR would overcome the obstacles facing it in a spirit of burden-sharing, solidarity and friendship.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (item 2 of the provisional agenda) (A/AC.96/ES/L.1)

5. The agenda was adopted.

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (agenda item 3)

6. Mr. STOLTENBERG (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) welcomed participants to the extraordinary session and expressed his pleasure at attending the first formal meeting of the Executive Committee. He also welcomed the delegation of Namibia and said that Namibia's presence attested to the fruits of international solidarity and co-operation at its best.

7. Every week the national and international press carried reports about refugee migration, which reflected the increasing importance of UNHCR's work and the way it handled those situations. The refugee situation was a reflection of the world's political health and the international community's ability to cope with the situation was a reflection of its moral health. The refugee issue should no longer be viewed in terms of charity and the refugee problem should be placed on the political agenda. After four months in the post of High Commissioner, he was convinced that the concept of foreign policy was changing from one of dealing with an enemy to one where emphasis was placed on resolving common problems. Consequently, there was more dialogue between the Soviet Union and the United States of America and more opportunities had been created for solving problems than at any other time since the Second World War. However, not all the 38 wars being waged in the world today were between countries and indeed a number were within countries. The security policy had therefore become less and less a military policy and increasingly a question of common security involving the issues of poverty, the environment, economic development policy, terrorism and drugs. He was concerned that refugees and migration had not been included in the agenda of the new foreign policy concept and that as long as the issue was treated as one of charity, UNHCR would never be able to cope with the problems before it.

8. There had been relatively little discussion of UNHCR's financial situation at previous sessions; the current session would address that issue in greater depth. UNHCR was being called upon to assist twice as many refugees as 10 years ago, although its funding had not kept pace with that increase. His strategy to improve the funding situation and overcome the economic and financial constraints was predicted on six main pillars: a better use of UNHCR resources; a search for new donors; private or non-traditional sources; political tools; voluntary repatriation and traditional donors.

9. To secure the first pillar, namely a better use of resources, he had established an internal ad hoc Review Group charged with the dual tasks of defining the role of UNHCR as it entered the 1990s and of proposing an organizational structure that would enable UNHCR to play a meaningful role on the world scene. The Review Group had submitted its report early in March 1990 and its recommendations were being implemented. At Headquarters, the direct lines reporting to him had been reduced from 23 to 10 and he had attempted to introduce some rotation at the top. He was confident that in the Senior Management Committee he now had machinery capable of taking policy decisions and following them through. The process should lead to much desired economies in terms of staff and general administrative costs. He was also determined to pursue a consistent policy of rotation as well as of a significant enhancement of the status of women in UNHCR and to emphasize the use of unused talents. He hoped also that the recommendations of the Permament Working Group on the Situation of Women in UNHCR would substantially redress the inequitable representation of women at all levels. He recognized that staff reductions and

the freeze on external recruitment created difficulties and he hoped to accomplish the planned restructuring and staff reductions with as little disruption as possible and with the fewest possible consequences for the persons concerned. The individual staff members realized that the changes were being made in order to improve the well-being of refugees and all the changes should be made with respect for the dignity of the refugees and UNHCR staff. Plans were under way to close and gradually phase out 10 to 15 field offices. He felt that UNHCR should hold fewer meetings and devote more time to the refugees themselves.

10. The second pillar of his funding strategy was to find new donors. Preparations to launch into new avenues of potential funding were underway and he hoped that by the end of the year he would be able to report on the first direct contacts and on concrete results.

11. The third pillar was the private non-traditional sector. In his meetings with the industrial sector, he had noted a genuine interest in refugee and migration issues but he was frankly not too hopeful because the industrial sector preferred to give priority to environmental issues. That kind of assistance could be very useful at the local level because private funds could be of great help in individual countries or parts of individual countries. He was also reluctant to embark on fund raising and to make UNHCR compete with non-governmental organizations or UNICEF.

12. The fourth pillar of his strategy was political tools. It was important to use political initiatives to ease tensions to prevent a refugee situation from emerging by helping people before they became refugees and contribute to solutions of existing problems.

13. Voluntary repatriation, the fifth pillar, was the best solution of all. At the present time, there were opportunities for voluntary repatriation. Namibia was a perfect example; 43,000 Namibians had been repatriated and UNHCR could report that the job had been done. As a result of the developments in Europe, he saw no reason to anticipate new refugees at present; indeed, refugees should be able to return to their countries of origin. In Cambodia, the Secretary-General had designated UNHCR as the lead agency for the repatriation of some 300,000 Cambodian refugees and displaced persons. In Central America, UNHCR was trying to contribute to the peace process through its involvement in the return of Nicaraguans to their country. During the first three months of 1990, the voluntary return of some 7,700 Salvadorian refugees from Honduras had brought that protracted refugee problem to a successful conclusion. UNHCR was striving to identify ways and means of promoting the voluntary return of Afghan refugees and was hopeful that recent statistics showing that each day some 150 families returned might create a momentum which could lead to the voluntary repatriation of more than 100,000 persons within the next four months. Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran had been most generous in receiving some 5 to 6 million refugees from Afghanistan. UNHCR had received informal notice that it could have an important job to do in assisting the return of South African refugees. In other parts of Africa, conditions were favourable for the return of large numbers of refugees to their countries of origin, but those hopeful prospects were, in some cases, being hampered by the lack of funds. For example, the appeal launched for $US 37 million to cover the local integration as well as voluntary return of some 430,000 Ethiopians had not received any

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significant contributions. If repatriation tasks succeeded, resources would be handled better and funds would thus be made available. One of the problems facing the UNHCR today was the lack of funding which prevented it from taking advantage of the opportunities for repatriation that occurred.

14. The sixth and final pillar of his funding strategy, namely traditional donors, was fundamental to the income and budget of UNHCR. He wished to express UNHCR's warm thanks to the traditional donors for their generous and steadily growing contributions over the years.

15. He would welcome any comments or ideas from the Executive Committee on ways of improving UNHCR's funding basis. Meanwhile, UNHCR needed the Executive Committee's support in allowing the Office to continue its work without major disruptions.

16. The budget being submitted for the approval of the Executive Committee involved cuts in three areas: delivery of assistance to refugees, the host Governments and UNHCR staff. He wished to stress his deep concern at the financial situation of UNHCR, which was not only confronted with an extremely tight schedule in relation to its financial obligations for 1990 but was also unable to predict its income in 1991. He had been told that in 1989 it had taken over 800 entries in UNHCR's accounts and over more than 12 months to arrive at the half billion dollars it received in contributions. Such a lack of predictability and thus stability had to be seriously addressed if the budget was to be managed in a professional and cost-effective manner. The revised budget being submitted for 1990 represented a reasonable balance between the requirements of the world's 15 million refugees and the income that could realistically be expected. The trends in increasing contributions over the last four years and indeed during the last five months were encouraging and he was most grateful to the Chairman of the Executive Committee for his efforts in seeking to increase UNHCR's funding base, especially his appeal letter of 7 May 1990 on behalf of the members of the Executive Committee. He was also deeply grateful to the Prime Minister of Sweden of his initiative in addressing more than 60 Goverments urging them to support UNCHR's refugee programmes. He was also very appreciative of the efforts made to meet the needs of refugees by impoverished host countries, mostly belonging to the group of least developed countries. Particularly in Africa, the presence of refugees was an added burden on the already severely strained infrastructures of those countries and added to the extreme hardship borne by the local population. He felt it imperative that UNHCR's limited investments in the humanitarian field should be complemented by wider resources from development agencies in order to enable the local population to break out of the vicious circle of poverty. He had addressed the letter to that effect to all the competent United Nations agencies and international organizations. He intended to pursue that matter vigorously and he relied on the support of Executive Committee members in the various fora where such matters were discussed.

17. The funding crisis was so preoccupying that it had almost overshadowed his main function of providing international protection to refugees. Some positive important events had occurred in that sphere which gave grounds for optimism, such as changes in countries of origin which facilitated the voluntary repatriation of refugees and the lifting by two States of the geographical reservation to the 1951 Convention. On the other hand there had been some very disturbing events and serious cases involving thousands of

persons subjected to refoulement, push-offs expulsion, extradition; in certain countries asylum seekers and refugees continued to be detained in inhuman conditions. It was ironic that at a time when human rights were being increasingly respected in parts of the world where the concept had hitherto been ignored, the rights of refugees to be protected were being increasingly violated elsewhere. He was also aware that the economic and social decline in developing countries had increased the flow of migrants within and among countries. His concern was that, as a result, genuine asylum seekers were sometimes being treated as economic migrants fleeing poverty rather than as refugees escaping political or other forms of persecution. His direct concern was that refugees should find a safe haven. He was equally concerned that the international community should face the challenge of migration including the flight from poverty through a development-oriented approach to humanitarian emergencies.

18. The example of Viet Nam raised the question of how it was possible to offer assistance in a situation where there was the threat of a breakdown in the principle of first asylum. The situation in Hong Kong was not an isolated one but was indicative of a series of such circumstances that might have a contagious effect; that was why it was all the more imperative to continue to seek solutions that would serve the interests of refugees that were the responsibility of UNHCR.

19. He expressed his satisfaction with his contacts with non-governmental organizations over the previous four months, and expressed his determination to maintain them. As the World Summit on Children drew close, it was appropriate to answer those who questioned the value of UNHCR expenditure on education and schooling. That expenditure was a vital factor in keeping alive the hope for solutions and belief that there was light at the end of the tunnel, although efforts were under way to persuade other organizations to share the burden of education.

20. In December 1990, UNHCR would celebrate its fortieth anniversary, a milestone that often marked the mid-life crisis where human beings were concerned. He was convinced that UNHCR would emerge a stronger organization, with the additional asset of the close relationship which had developed between it and the Executive Committee. Its focus should be on helping the 15 million individuals waiting for a durable solution to find one, as it had done for the 26 million individuals it had helped in the course of its history.

STATEMENTS BY THE OBSERVER DELEGATIONS OF NAMIBIA AND THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

21. Mr. ITHETE (Observer for Namibia) said that his country was mindful of the responsibilities entailed by its membership of UNHCR and that it would give its fullest co-operation and support to the High Commissioner in fulfilling his mandate. Namibia was extremely grateful for all the support it had received from the United Nations along the path to the freedom and independence it currently enjoyed. The heaviest burden had been borne by UNHCR which had repatriated over 41,000 Namibian refugees, a record that constituted a historic success for which all those involved deserved credit.

22. Namibia would do everything in its power to fulfil its constitutional obligation to render support and service to refugees. Consequently, on 23 May 1990, the Namibian Cabinet had approved Namibia's accession to a number of international instruments, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto.

23. Mr. BRAUNEIS (Observer for the German Democratic Republic) said that his country's participation as an observer at the current session signalled a new approach to the problem of refugees and asylum that was the result of the new departure in its social development. The German Democratic Republic was prepared to contribute, within its possibilities, to the assistance provided to refugees. It also wished to share in the experience and information that had been gathered on the solution of problems relating to foreigners and asylum-seekers.

24. There had been a formidable escalation in the problems of refugees and asylum on the territory of the German Democratic Republic, and the appointment of a government official for the affairs of foreigners, with the rank of State Secretary, reflected the importance attached by the Government of the German Democratic Republic to those issues. In a policy statement on 19 April 1990, the Prime Minister had drawn attention to the need to clarify the legal status of foreigners living in the German Democratic Republic and had stressed the importance of visualizing cultural diversity as a source of wealth. New laws on the rights of foreigners and on asylum were currently under preparation in the German Democratic Republic, which was preparing to accede to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to its additional Protocol, a step that would undoubtedly herald intensified co-operation between the German Democratic Republic and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TEMPORARY WORKING GROUP (agenda item 4) (A/AC.96/742)

25. The CHAIRMAN recalled the mandate given to the Temporary Working Group in paragraph 30 (i) of the report of the fortieth session of the Executive Committee (A/AC.96/737). The report of the Temporary Working Group (A/AC.96/742) constituted a well-balanced text which indicated what was in fact feasible in view of the manifold constraints under which the Temporary Working Group had operated. It would prove useful in attaining the common aim, which was to contribute to helping refugees more than had been possible in the past.

26. Mr. LILLIS (Observer for Ireland), speaking on behalf of the member States of the European Community, recalled that in October 1989 the Executive Committee had met in a situation of deepening crisis and that for the first time the European Community and its member States, which contributed over 40 per cent of UNHCR's budget had spoken with one voice, making specific proposals on identifying more effective ways of meeting the needs of refugees throughout the world. The Temporary Working Group, had produced a consensus report reflecting the views and needs of all those with a concern for refugee matters. The European Community and its member States regarded the consensus achieved as of vital importance and believed that the report was an important step in addressing UNHCR's financial problems. They welcomed the recommendation for a decision that the members of the Working Group should follow up, in the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters and prepare, in conjuction with UNHCR, recommendations for consideration by the

forty-first session of the Executive Committee in October 1990 on funding options and unresolved budgetary issues, as well as the recommendations which emphasized the importance of financial planning and procedural review within UNHCR. They believed the strong emphasis on increased co-ordination and co-operation between UNHCR and other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations was essential in order more effectively to address the needs of many millions of human beings. They considered the deliberations of the forthcoming Working Group to examine protection and solutions in a coherent and comprehensive manner to be of particular importance in pursuing appropriate burden-sharing among all those involved in refugee matters.

27. The European Community and its member States looked forward to a fruitful outcome to its dialogue with the High Commissioner on exploring ways of better addressing the Community's funding capabilities, particularly for funding projects aimed at durable solutions. It was important for the European Commission and the member States of the European Community which were members and observers of the Executive Committee to be able to participate in all fora where the issues examined by the Temporary Working Group would continue to be reviewed.

28. Although the crisis which UNHCR had faced when the Temporary Working Group had been established was far from resolved, the European Community and its member States appreciated the way in which the High Commissioner and his staff had approached their task in very difficult circumstances, and they would endeavour to adopt a constructive attitude on agenda item 5, and in particular on the revised working target for the 1990 General Programmes currently proposed by UNHCR.

29. Mr. KOSIN (Yugoslavia), speaking on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that the crisis faced by UNHCR was of particular concern to those countries, which comprised most, if not all the countries of origin of refugees and the countries hosting refugees. They had shown their concern with the problem by their active participation in the work of the Task Forces and of the Temporary Working Group. The Temporary Working Group had been able to identify the bottle-necks and to make recommendations. It had produced a well-balanced report with compromise formulations in respect of matters such as priority setting, co-operation with other United Nations agencies and whether UNHCR programmes should be needs- or resource-driven, as well as highlighting the increasing burden of host countries.

30. The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement hoped that the streamlining and rationalization exercise just concluded would enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of UNHCR in providing assistance and protection and seeking durable solutions for refugees. Notwithstanding their fragile economies and meagre resources, host countries would continue to extend humanitarian support to refugees. Lastly, on behalf of the delegations of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, he recommended the report of the Temporary Working Group for adoption by the Executive Committee.

31. Mr. CESKA (Austria) extended his country's fullest support for the six-pillar strategy outlined by the High Commissioner in his initial statement. The Temporary Working Group had produced a report that corresponded in every respect with Austria's perception of the importance of co-operation in order to assist UNHCR to overcome its grave financial crisis.

The report was the fruit of an exceptional dialogue under exceptional circumstances. Although there were some areas in which the report did not give definite answers to the problems posed, that was attributable to the very nature of UNHCR. The problem hinged upon the need to find ways of linking the budgetary approval process to resources which in fact could only be anticipated, on account of the unpredictable funding structure of UNHCR. Although the Temporary Working Group had put forward proposals to solve the immediate financial crisis, it had to be borne in mind that similar problems would continue to arise, as they would in any organization in which there was a gap between needs and resources. That gap necessitated the setting of priorities, which was always an agonizing task.

32. He hoped that the report would be adopted by consensus, and stressed that it should not be seen as the end, but rather the beginning of a process to be pursued by the High Commissioner and the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters. He endorsed the plea made by the Chairman, for the working group on protection and solutions called for by the fortieth session of the Executive Committee to begin work as soon as possible. Lastly, he stressed the importance of the chapter in the report on co-operation with other organizations, although it had to be borne in mind that the solutions it offered would only be effective in the medium or long term.

33. Mr. LIMAN (United States of America) said that the report of the Temporary Working Group constituted an agenda for action that would enable all those concerned to address refugee needs in all their dimensions. In order not to lose the benefits of that exercise it was particularly important to follow up its recommendations. He drew attention in particular to two elements in the report for which follow-up was vitally important: UNHCR should provide the Executive Committee with monthly updates on the budgetary situation to allow it to keep close track of that vital factor; secondly, the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters should meet quarterly at the expert level in order to monitor items and ensure, in particular, a continuing exchange between the Executive Committee and UNHCR on the recommendations contained in the report. He expressed the conviction that on the basis of the efforts of previous months, UNHCR would be able to address problems more effectively than it had in the past, particularly in view of the success of the High Commissioner and his deputies in taking hard decisions which had nevertheless been built on consensus. He pledged the support of the United States of America to UNHCR in facing the challenges before it.

34. Mr. ORAT (Sudan) said that the report of the Temporary Working Group was the product of dedicated effort by all parties to overcome the crisis facing UNHCR. That crisis was of great concern to the Sudan which, as a least developed country, had been shouldering the burden of more than 1 million refugees for over two decades. In the context of its prevailing economic difficulties, Sudan's meagre resources and weak infrastructure in refugee hosting areas had been stretched beyond the limits. Moreover, new influxes continued to add to the country's heavy caseload. He welcomed the reference made by the High Commissioner in his statement to that particularly serious problem, and endorsed the approach advocated by him. Despite the grave situation it faced, his Government was sparing no effort to discharge its responsibility towards refugees, a task which could not be achieved, however, without the full co-operation of the international community in providing adequate and timely assistance.

35. It was his delegation's view that the painful measures envisaged in the Temporary Working Group's report would have neither legal nor moral justification beyond the current financial year; it was essential not to institutionalize a situation that jeopardized the well-being of refugees and put host countries and UNHCR in a critical position. In that connection, the note on the impact of the financial crisis on UNHCR activities (A/AC.96/744) fell short of what the Working Group had originally envisaged. His delegation believed that the study was incomplete and required further elaboration. At the same time, he wished to underscore the recommendation contained in the Temporary Working Group's report that countries of asylum such as the Sudan should not be made to bear any additional burden as a result of the temporary austerity measures proposed. Priority setting in the manner suggested in the report was linked to the current financial crisis and did not prevent the High Commissioner from discharging his mandate of providing protection and seeking durable solutions for refugees.

36. The question of durable solutions warranted closer attention. Refugee aid and development projects were of central importance in that regard. It was all the more disappointing, therefore, that difficulties had been encountered in launching the southern Kassala agricultural project in eastern Sudan. With the exception of the generous initiative of one Government, no contributions had been forthcoming. His delegation called on the High Commissioner to exert greater efforts and to give adequate support to such vital projects that served durable solutions.

37. In conclusion, he reiterated that his country would continue to co-operate with the High Commissioner and wished to thank all donor countries acting in the spirit of international solidarity and burden sharing. The Temporary Working Group's report symbolized the comprehension between donors, countries of asylum and UNHCR, and his delegation would join the consensus in adopting it as a special arrangement for a crisis situation of a temporary nature.

38. Mr. KAMINGA (Japan) said that his Government welcomed and fully endorsed the contents of the Temporary Working Group's report. With a view to effective implementation of its recommendations, which would require both wisdom and courage, his delegation wished to present some thoughts for discussion. Given limited resource availability, the need to pursue further rationalization and cost-saving measures in order better to serve the most urgent needs of suffering refugees in various parts of the world could not be over-emphasized. As suggested in the report, one approach would be to recruit United Nations volunteers as a relatively cost-effective way to deploy much needed field personnel swiftly on a temporary basis. Also, the proposal in paragraph 42 (1) of the report, whereby donor Governments would be invited to incorporate refugee-related projects into their bilateral development aid schemes, could provide a viable alternative to lessen UNHCR's burden in income generating or environment-related projects. That proposal merited further study.

39. With regard to burden sharing between UNHCR and other development-oriented agencies, his delegation favoured close consultation among missions in Geneva since concerted efforts by Governments, especially those represented in the governing bodies of the relevant agencies, were crucial to ensuring co-ordinated action for the benefit of refugees.

40. His delegation also attached importance to strengthening the evaluation function with a view to formulating recommendations to enhance cost-effectiveness. Concerning the funding mechanism, he wished to emphasize the role of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters as described in paragraph 40 (k) of the Working Group's report. That report had been prepared in the spirit of well-balanced burden sharing among countries of origin, countries of asylum, donor countries, UNHCR and other relevant agencies, and he invited all delegations to give serious thought to its various recommendations and proposals.

41. Mr. SHANNON (Canada) said that his delegation had been much encouraged by the new directions which the High Commissioner had set for the organization and wished to assure him of the full support of the Canadian Government in dealing with the complex and demanding challenges of his Office.

42. The Temporary Working Group's report contained some very useful suggestions. It represented a basis on which to construct a consensus on recommendations which would enable UNHCR to provide protection and maintenance assistance more effectively to refugees. However, in his delegation's view, it fell short in certain key respects. The fundamental structural problems which had allowed the current financial situation to develop remained unsolved. The absence of direct linkage to available resources in the budget approval and expenditure process left UNHCR extremely vulnerable to a repetition of the previous year's financial crisis. Scarcity of financial resources was not a temporary phenomenon and its reality had to be acknowledged. There was a need for some form of linkage between income and expenditure, or some form of priority setting, to avoid the risk of a permament financial crisis since assessed needs regularly exceeded available income.

43. Despite those reservations, his delegation fully supported the adoption of the Temporary Working Group's report. It was the beginning of the process of resolving the financial crisis, a process which should be pursued by the High Commissioner and the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

44. The High Commissioner had recently made welcome changes in UNHCR to strengthen the decision-making process and to establish clear lines of authority. It was to be expected that they would enhance management control and improve accountability as well as transparency. His country fully supported those reforms, which should also allow UNHCR to focus its attention on a number of systemic problems that currently inhibited a more efficient and effective response to the global refugee situation. First and foremost, there was a need to bring greater certainty to the budgeting and funding process. Second, jurisdictional responsibility between UNHCR and other United Nations agencies such as UNDP had to be clarified. Third, UNHCR in conjunction with the broader United Nations system, needed to establish a mechanism to encourage and facilitate the preferred durable solution, early repatriation. Such a mechanism would help to avoid protracted refugee situations. Lastly, it was time that UNHCR and the United Nations system, made a serious effort to come to grips with root causes and the resultant problem of mass exoduses, which were placing such a heavy burden on UNHCR and on many of the Governments represented in the Executive Committee.

45. His delegation encouraged the High Commissioner to continue to review the fundamental problems which faced his Office, with the object of reducing the burden on UNHCR through increased emphasis on prevention and earlier resolution of refugee situations. That objective was in everyone's interest: UNHCR, countries of asylum and, most importantly, the refugees themselves.

46. Mr. FAN Guoxiang (China) said that the adoption of the Temporary Working Group's report demonstrated the concern of various quarters over the refugee question and reflected the political will and commitment of the international community to resolve a situation in which the number of refugees was showing a tendency to increase rather than decline. In view of its severe financial crisis, UNHCR was indeed faced with an arduous task. His delegation had always held that the fundamental starting point in refugee work should be the best interests of the refugees themselves. Therefore, the correct and feasible approach to the question was to expand financial resources and establish plans of activities and programmes of assistance in accordance with real needs by further strengthening international co-operation and mobilizing all parties concerned in the spirit of humanitarianism, international solidarity and burden sharing. That spirit was reflected to varying degrees in the recommendations. His delegation supported in particular the recommendation that in allocating the resources UNHCR should, as stated in its mandate, give priority to the genuine needs of refugees.

47. The traditional donor countries continued to provide generous financial and material assistance. Their contributions merited the appreciation of the international community. Yet, at the same time, the significant role played by the asylum countries in refugee assistance should not be underestimated. Having settled nearly 300,000 refugees, China was well aware of the enormous economic and social burdens that such assistance entailed for the developing countries. Undoubtedly, countries of resettlement had also accepted a large number of refugees, but they could make a selection in a considered manner. Countries of first asylum had no such alternative. His delegation endorsed the recommendation that those countries should not be made to bear any additional burden as a result of the measures envisaged in the report. UNHCR, furthermore, should examine the adverse impact of repeated cuts to refugee programmes both on refugees and on the asylum countries.

48. With regard to the question of co-operation between UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, the report put forward many recommendations, including a call on the High Commissioner to request the Secretary-General to ensure a maximum of co-ordination and burden sharing among all relevant United Nations agencies in support of refugees. His delegation welcomed those recommendations and hoped to see concrete measures taken for their implementation at an early date.

49. Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) said that the set of measures proposed in the Temporary Working Group's report should be seen not as a static but as a continuous exercise to be reconsidered as and when appropriate. While not distancing itself from the common position taken by the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, as set up by the representative of Yugoslavia, his delegation wished to place on record that it considered it vital for UNHCR to contribute and, indeed, play a key role not only in cases of refugee flows from one country to another but also when mass displacements occurred within a country. In Lebanon, for example, acts of violence had resulted in such a displacement affecting more than one and a half million people. While it was

essential for UNHCR to co-ordinate its activities with other United Nations bodies, his delegation believed that the organization, by virtue of its long experience, could play an effective role in such situations.

50. Mr. MAHIGA (United Republic of Tanzania) said it was important that a consensus be reached and maintained, because the nature of the problem facing UNHCR could be meaningfully addressed only through the collective action of the entire international community. The viability of UNHCR was essential to the survival of millions of people and the Temporary Working Group's report should be welcomed with a sense of appreciation and gratification. It was primarily a guide for action during the current difficult times, and should stimulate the political will to provide a comprehensive response to the refugee phenomenon in all its manifestations. It was, of course, the responsibility of management at all times to ensure a cost-effective and efficient administration, but UNHCR should be allowed to retain the capability to meet the whole range of complex refugee needs. Rationalization, in other words, was a means to an end and not the end itself.

51. As an asylum country, Tanzania pledged to do its utmost to maintain the consensus and undertake the necessary rationalization measures, but it was concerned that the absence of co-ordinated development-oriented assistance might undermine its efforts to facilitate local integration of refugees within the national economy. The report before the Executive Committee addressed that issue, but his delegation was not sure how the practical aspects would be realized by other agencies in conjunction with UNHCR. His country remained committed to promoting other durable solutions, but that endeavour could succeed only if the whole international community co-operated positively.

52. Lastly, his country was disturbed by the increasing incidence of refoulement, expulsions and extraditions of refugees in various parts of the world. That negative trend should be treated seriously, as should the growing number of refugees and the problem of inadequate resources to cope with that increase. The international community needed to re-examine those issues and respond accordingly.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Extraordinary session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 449th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 28 May 1990, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. DANNENBRING (Federal Republic of Germany)

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Consideration of the Report of the Executive Committee Temporary Working Group (continued)

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GE.90-01411/2035B

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TEMPORARY WORKING GROUP (agenda item 4) (continued) (A/AC.96/742)

1. Mr. de RIEDMATTEN (Switzerland) welcomed the outcome of the deliberations of the Executive Committee Temporary Working Group; the main feature of the report (A/AC.96/742) had been the consensus of all the members of the Working Group, in other words, of all the States concerned. In fact, that consensus had been essential in order to preserve the major part of the UNHCR programme at a time when it was called upon to meet growing needs with few resources. The task ahead was to implement the recommendations made in the report.

2. The organizational and rationalization measures announced by the High Commissioner largely matched the recommendations made by the Ad hoc Review Group on the Role and Structure of UNHCR. In so far as the cutback in staff affected the Technical Support Services, it was desirable for UNHCR to maintain its capacity to make its own contribution to designing assistance programmes.

3. Both donor countries and host countries should work together to implement two recommendations without further delay. The first concerned the financing of the transport, storage and handling of food aid sent to the countries of asylum. Switzerland usually bore part of those costs and informed UNHCR of the advance payments made in respect of that item to the World Food Programme (WFP). It would be desirable for donors of food aid to urge WFP to include that category of costs in its appeals for funds and that a larger number of donors should contribute larger amounts towards financing it. The second recommendation concerned the conditions in which assistance programmes were delivered. Countries of asylum should be able to grant UNHCR favourable exchange rates and reduce other costs, in particular for the local procurement of supplies, as they already did for other agencies.

4. The other measures proposed by the Working Group would only be able to yield results over the medium term. Switzerland attached particular importance to the recommendations aimed at developing closer operational co-operation between UNHCR and other governmental or non-governmental organizations working with refugees. Such a step would not only be likely to improve the quality of assistance, but also to reduce its cost considerably.

5. While it recognized the importance of seeking new donors, Switzerland shared the High Commissioner's view that it was inadvisable to expect a major contribution from the private sector. Foundations or commercial enterprises might be invited, for example, to finance research projects, although care should be taken not to deprive of their sources of funding, non-governmental organizations which were the operational partners of UNHCR and which were being requested by UNHCR to shoulder a greater share of support costs. However, the efforts being made by UNHCR to make its name more familiar to the public should be supported.

6. The Working Group had identified another promising approach in its proposal to consider whether the distinction between general and special programmes remained valid. That distinction occasionally prevented durable solutions from being adopted due to Special Programmes not having sufficient resources. His delegation was gratified to note that, in its appeals for

funds, UNHCR was already complying with the recommendation that a proportional share of UNHCR's support costs should be borne by Special Programmes. In addition, it felt that special attention should be given to the recommendations that the evaluation function be strengthened, and to the recommendation that the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters should have a greater role, particularly by allowing it to meet earlier, prior to the sessions of the Executive Committee.

7. By approving the report of the Working Group, Switzerland also acknowledged that financial constraints made it necessary to set priorities. While it was important to seek durable solutions, the available funds should be used primarily for life-saving and life-sustaining activities. The stabilization of UNHCR's financial position, and, in the final analysis, the possibility for it to carry out its mission depended on that.

8. Mr. LARSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the reform process which had started with the establishment of the Temporary Working Group had proved very positive for all parties concerned. The recommendations made by the Group were satisfactory and it was to be hoped that the Executive Committee would approve them by consensus. However, the recommendations were only a beginning and their implementation would demand a special effort and concerted action on the part of all concerned.

9. Donor countries should provide UNHCR with more assured funding. In addition, the donor community should be expanded to include all countries with the necessary resources to offer assistance. Furthermore, all donors should do their utmost to announce their contributions sufficiently in advance so as to simplify UNHCR's management role and to make it easier for it to plan its activities.

10. Countries of asylum were frequently among the poorest, although they nevertheless had to improve conditions for the delivery of assistance programmes in their countries, in particular by simplifying the implementation of rationalization measures and granting UNHCR the most favourable exchange rates.

11. UNHCR itself should continue to rationalize its management and operations so as to become as cost-effective as possible. In that connection, the Nordic countries commended the decisions by the High Commissioner following the work of the Ad hoc Review Group on the Role and Structure of UNHCR.

12. As part of the saving and rationalization exercise, the need for UNHCR representation in Europe should be reviewed. The European countries should solve their refugee problems themselves by means of closer co-operation. United Nations resources should go primarily to those regions of the world without sufficient resources of their own.

13. It was also essential to address the root causes that had led to the increase in the number of refugees in the world. The Nordic countries wished to emphasize the importance of broader co-operation between UNHCR, other relevant United Nations organizations and NGOs. Lastly, if the consensus that appeared to be emerging in favour of the adoption of the report of the Temporary Working Group were to have a full impact, the overview procedure begun should continue in some form within the existing institutional set-up.

14. The Nordic countries considered that a budget of $378 million for General Programmes in 1990 was a minimum, and hoped, in view of UNHCR's serious financial situation, that all parties would share the responsibility. In 1989, the contributions of the Nordic countries (a total of approximately $100 million) had accounted for about 20 per cent of UNHCR's total resources. The Governments of the Nordic countries were willing to maintain that level of contribution in 1990 and even to make additional financial efforts, and called for similar efforts from other donors.

15. In Western countries which were by tradition generous to refugees, the steadily growing numbers of asylum-seekers and the increase in movements of people from South to North and from East to West were likely to present serious challenges in the years ahead. To resolve them, a balanced policy would need to be formulated and durable solutions of a global and humanitarian character would have to be sought jointly.

16. The Nordic countries supported the High Commissioner's endeavours to put the refugee question more firmly on the political agenda of the international community. Believing that new strategies should be developed in order to deal with the root causes as well as the resulting problems, they attached great importance to the consultations initiated by UNHCR with a number of Governments on the questions of asylum-seekers in Europe and North America, and very much hoped the process would achieve tangible results.

17. Mr. DUBAD (Somalia) expressed appreciation of the quality of the report of the Temporary Working Group (A/AC.96/742) and paid a tribute to the Nordic countries for the crucial role they had played during the Working Group's deliberations, in which Somalia had also taken an active part. If, as he hoped, the recommendations of the report were implemented, they would greatly contribute to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of UNHCR's programmes.

18. There had been an extensive debate within the Working Group on programme priority-setting in the event of a serious shortfall in resources. Some members had wanted UNHCR to be given guidelines while others had been of the view that priority-setting might have adverse consequences for the refugees. There was no doubt that UNHCR's financial constraints in 1989 and the austerity measures adopted in the first half of 1990 had had undesirable effects on refugees world wide. In East Africa, for example, increased malnutrition had been recorded in many areas, together with an escalation in nutrition-related diseases and cases of cholera, as well as increases in infectious diseases. If the situation of refugees was to be prevented from deteriorating still further, priority-setting should be interpreted as judiciously as possible and the international community should explore possibilities of increasing the funding level of UNHCR for the second half of the year.

19. It was also extremely important to find durable solutions. However, in spite of the special appeals launched during the current year, less than 5 per cent of the funding required for repatriation/returnee programmes had been received. Nevertheless, those programmes were not only the best durable solution for refugees, but their implementation would also enable substantial resources to be released rapidly.

20. Somalia was a case in point. Approximately 446,000 refugees were awaiting the helping hand of the international community in order to return home or to integrate into Somali society under the programme devised by the Tripartite Commission. If that programme were implemented it could, moreover, also facilitate the return of Somalis who had fled the country in terror from rebel elements some two years ago. His delegation therefore strongly urged the donor community, which had already been so generous, not to weaken in its resolve and to rescue those refugees.

21. Developing countries like Somalia that were also countries of asylum, had experienced considerable environmental and infrastructural damage on account of the influx of refugees, quite apart from the social and political ills such situations entailed. Unfortunately, the burden shouldered by host countries was not easily quantifiable, a fact that partially concealed their real contribution towards the upkeep of refugees. Accordingly, Somalia also considered that the burden should be equitably shared among the international community. Furthermore, it noted with satisfaction the emphasis the report placed on the need for interaction between refugees and local communities and the need to extend the scope of the relevant United Nations programmes and national development plans to areas hosting refugees, without prejudice to UNHCR's mandate. However, only concerted action by the international community as a whole could clear the hurdles in the way of the implementation of that policy.

22. Mr. GARBA (Nigeria) said that his delegation had studied carefully the recommendations of the Working Group and was gratified that many of them, in particular those that had potential advantages for UNHCR activities, had been adopted by consensus. When implemented, those recommendations should enable the Office of the High Commissioner to fulfil its mandate in a more satisfactory manner. His delegation strongly urged the High Commissioner to request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to ensure the timely implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/137, which called for greater inter-agency co-operation in addressing the needs of refugees.

23. In some areas, however, including the method of presenting UNHCR budgets, the members of the Working Group had been obliged to find compromise solutions. Nigeria considered that UNHCR should continue to prepare its budgets on the basis of an objective assessment of refugee needs and subsequently explore, with the support of members of the Executive Committee, all possible sources of funding. If, as had occurred in the previous year, funding shortfalls occurred, the High Commissioner should be allowed the leverage and flexibility necessary to determine how best to address the situation, without being pinned down by regulatory mechanisms such as priority-setting.

24. For third world nations, and in particular for poor countries of asylum in Africa, the refugee problem was a reality that could not be reduced to accounting or legal limitations. It was a tragedy that challenged the collective conscience of the international community. Nigeria paid tribute to all those countries that had consistently supported UNHCR activities and urged them not to slacken their humanitarian efforts at a time when new sources of funding were being sought which should ensure more equitable burden-sharing.

25. Mrs. SINEGIORGIS (Observer for Ethiopia) said that she was happy to note that the Temporary Working Group had adopted its report (A/AC.96/742) by consensus.

26. Half of the world's 15 million refugees were on the African continent, where they were hosted by countries that possessed meagre resources and were beset by serious economic difficulties. Ethiopia, which was one of the least developed countries, had taken in some 800,000 refugees to whom it provided assistance, at the expense of its own drought-stricken population. In addition, the economic and social infrastructure of the zones of asylum was far from adequate, even for the local population, and essential needs such as primary health care, drinking water supply and basic education for school-age children were not fully met. If UNHCR was to fulfil its mandate, such indispensable services as were embodied in its programme needed to be implemented.

27. Unfortunately, the financial crisis faced by UNHCR had led it to reduce total disbursements for financing operational activities in 1990 from $13 to $5.4 million. The impact of the budgetary cut-back on relief operations had been extremely dramatic and had jeopardized the very survival of vulnerable groups of refugees such as infants, nursing mothers, the sick and the old. The situation vis-à-vis the repatriation programme was equally grim.

28. The financial crisis also seriously jeopardized the implementation of the programme for receiving and integrating Ethiopians returning from neighbouring countries, prescribed in the Tripartite Agreement concluded between the Governments of Ethiopia and Somalia and UNHCR.

29. Her delegation considered that refugees should not be penalized by the financial problems facing UNHCR; moreover, the refugee problem being a global issue, the international community as a whole had a responsibility to face up to it so that the additional economic, social and ecological burden placed on countries of asylum was fairly shared by all.

30. As for co-operation between United Nations specialized agencies and UNHCR, the recommendation put forward in the report of the Temporary Working Group more or less met the concern of Ethiopia. However, the specialized agencies needed to adapt their policies to suit the reality of the refugee problem, which required rapid action, and to develop and implement projects on behalf of refugees and refugee-affected areas. It was to be hoped that the Governing Council of UNDP would take the appropriate steps at its thirty-seventh session to be held next month in Geneva.

31. Mrs. LYAGOUBI-OUACHI (Tunisia) congratulated the High Commissioner on seeking to give fresh impetus to the work of UNHCR in spite of a difficult economic climate.

32. The adoption of the report of the Temporary Working Group by consensus attested to the spirit of compromise and dialogue that had presided over the Group's work. Although some studies had not yet been completed, the recommendations contained in the report, and which Tunisia endorsed, laid down sound foundations for UNHCR, and one must hope that they would succeed in bringing the organization out of the rut in which it found itself.

33. Although the present situation had made it necessary to examine UNHCR's methods of work, one should never lose sight of the higher interest of refugees, which required strengthened UNHCR activity in the field. The process of rationalizing the tasks of field offices should take full account of the specific circumstances of each region; in the region that comprised the Middle East and North Africa alone, there were no less than 300,000 refugees, not to mention the Palestinians who, moreover, had no access to international protection. Any cut-back in UNHCR's presence in that region would be contrary to the new policies, namely, a strengthened UNHCR activity in the field. Consequently, the measures recommended in that respect could only be temporary.

34. The major political and economic changes currently taking place throughout the world should be reflected in greater political and material support for UNHCR as an instrument for international co-operation on behalf of asylum-seekers. The international community had a historic and moral obligation to assist refugees and to provide a durable solution for their problems. The easing of tension in some trouble-spots should not lead to a reduction but rather to an intensification of UNHCR activity. However, for that UNHCR required adequate financial resources. Tunisia endorsed the repeated appeals made to the donor community to contribute more generously. The exploration of additional sources of funding, and in particular fund-raising from private sources should also be considered. Furthermore, the contribution of other international organizations co-operating with UNHCR could only be encouraged, on the understanding that it would in no way relieve the Office of the High Commissioner of its essential responsibilities, namely assistance to refugees, the protection of refugees and the search for durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation.

35. Mr. WALKER (Australia) said that he shared the general view that the report of the Temporary Working Group should be adopted by consensus. As several delegations had noted, it was the responsibility of good management to deliver cost-effective and efficient programmes. A fundamental link existed between income and expenditure, and his delegation looked forward to the conclusions of the work of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters on a number of unresolved issues. It also recognized that the Sub-Committee should meet more frequently, without, however, impeding the High Commissioner's activities. Like the national administrations, UNHCR and the High Commissioner were committed to continuing the streamlining exercise in order to do more with less resources. However, rather than acting as a brake, the member countries should be supportive.

36. He fully agreed with the High Commisssioner that the refugee issue should be placed on the international political agenda. The international community was responsible for preventing the emergence of situations that led to refugee flows and for remedying situations that had already caused flows. For its part, the Government of Australia had made considerable efforts to try to restore peace in Cambodia.

37. Mr. SAFAEE (Islamic Republic of Iran) commented first of all that the Temporary Working Group had performed an extremely useful exercise which had allowed participants to assess the full extent of the refugee problem and to conclude, with the help of the useful documents distributed by UNHCR, that the refugee problem, which was by its very nature an international one, received only scant and unequal attention from the international community, that the resources currently available to UNHCR were far from adequate and that the

financial crisis had entailed repeated budgetary cut-backs. It was to be hoped that, in the light of those realities, the donor countries would, while emphasizing the need for more rational use of resources, make more extensive financial commitments and agree to assume greater responsibility for refugees. Although the Working Group had adopted its report by consensus, that consensus did not reflect a genuine agreement on the facts, and in particular on the need for the international community to bear part of the very heavy burden imposed on the developing countries, themselves grappling with enormous economic difficulties, by the presence of millions of refugees on their territory. There were nearly 15 million refugees worldwide at the present time. It was unthinkable that they should be denied the assistance to which they were entitled on the pretext of saving a few dollars.

38. As far as priority-setting, in particular, was concerned, the proper criterion was that of the needs of refugees, which, according to UNHCR, should be determined in the light of several factors: characteristics and socio-economic profile of the refugees; the socio-economic environment of the country of asylum; physical environment and availability of natural resources and the prospects of durable solutions. As needs varied considerably from one group of refugees to another, it was vital to take into account the specificities of each situation when referring to the essential needs of refugees.

39. His delegation supported the recommendations of the Temporary Working Group on rationalization and better use of resources, provided they did not prejudice the situation of refugees. It also hoped, as the Working Group recommended, that the members of the Executive Committee would co-operate more closely with UNHCR, that specialized agencies would devote attention to the refugee problem and in particular that UNDP would take into account the presence of refugees when calculating the Indicative Planning Figure.

40. In paragraph 39 (g) of its report, the Temporary Working Group recommended that the measures envisaged should not entail additional burdens for countries of asylum. Those countries, which were mostly developing countries were already making a considerable contribution, and the implementation of some of the measures envisaged in the report, such as the involvement of refugees in the local economy, would depend essentially on the situation in those countries and on their domestic legislation.

41. The Executive Committee was to approve UNHCR's budget for the second half of 1990 at the current extraordinary session. His delegation hoped that it would be commensurate with the integral and interrelated needs of refugees, viewed globally and sympathetically, and that the new opportunities occurring for durable solutions for refugee problems in virtually all regions would be grasped. To do otherwise, in other words, to temporize in order to save a little money, would be dangerous as the situation could only worsen. Unfortunately, if UNHCR's budget for the previous three years was compared with projections for 1991, it was apparent that resources were far from adequate to meet the needs of the growing number of refugees.

42. Mr. AIT CHAALAL (Algeria) fully endorsed the remarks made by the representative of Yugoslavia, who had stated the position of the non-aligned countries. Although the report of the Temporary Working Group was not completely satisfactory, it was nevertheless acceptable.

43. In order to perform its mission UNHCR had to comply with the mandate with which it had been entrusted and which was based on two fundamental principles, namely, the moral commitment of the international community in the name of human solidarity, and the political will, without which no action was possible. UNHCR was required, in the context of its protection and assistance activities to satisfy the genuine needs of refugees, which were not merely material but also spiritual and moral: man needed bread, but he also needed education, care and dignity.

44. The present crisis was a challenge which the international community was duty-bound to take up, not by adopting isolated measures but by undertaking long-term activities. The crisis should also provide an opportunity for thinking about the future. States and peoples should increase their contributions, although at the same time other paths should be explored in an attempt to harness the maximum amount of resources.

45. He assured the High Commissioner of his Government's full and unconditional support and expressed his conviction that the international community would prove capable of mobilizing and meeting the legitimate expectations of millions of human beings living in poverty and distress.

46. Mr. RICUPERO (Brazil) said that in spite of the improvement in the international situation, the number of refugees had not declined nor had their plight been alleviated. His delegation reiterated its full support for the High Commissioner, in the discharge of his mandate, which required him above all to provide protection and assistance to refugees with a view to voluntary repatriation, which remained the most desirable permanent solution.

47. It was undeniable that the majority of refugees today were located in developing countries upon which they imposed a heavy burden, particularly the poorest countries. Over the previous decade, the gap between a small group of prosperous countries and a growing number of stagnant or decaying economies had continually widened, and had compounded the refugee problem. Refugee issues could no longer possibly be considered in isolation, but should be examined within the broader context of the development of the host regions.

48. On several occasions Brazil had already lent its support to initiatives designed to rationalize the structure and administration of UNHCR and it approved the Temporary Working Group's recommendations, most of which were reasonable and constructive, even if some of them needed further refinement, and had no difficulty in joining the consensus emerging in favour of adopting the report.

49. However, although Brazil welcomed the proposals for strengthening the co-operation between UNHCR and other agencies, his delegation considered that the measures proposed in that connection should in no circumstances lead to a transfer of responsibilities. The refugee question should remain essentially the responsibility of UNHCR. The search for a better cost-efficiency ratio should not lead to a limitation of the scope of the Programme or to sight being lost of UNHCR's humanitarian objectives.

50. The implementation of the Temporary Working Group's recommendations should alleviate UNHCR's serious difficulties, although it would certainly be inadequate to resolve the crisis once and for all. Unless very significant additional resources were mustered, the situation of refugees could only grow worse. Consequently, it was to be hoped that the international community would respond positively to the recent and urgent appeals made by UNHCR and provide it with the funds it needed.

51. His delegation had already had an opportunity to express its appreciation of the protection and assistance activities being carried out by the countries of Central America with refugee populations, with the co-operation of UNHCR and the support of the international community. In that connection, he emphasized that Brazil supported the objectives defined at the International Conference on Central American Refugees, of resuming a humanitarian and political dialogue and thus pave the way for lasting peace and development in the region.

52. At their meeting in Montelimar, Nicaragua, on 2 and 3 April 1990, the Heads of State of five Central American countries had adopted a Declaration in which they had agreed to support the implementation of development programmes for displaced persons, returnees and refugees in Central America and to request the international community to maintain and support the commitments made to date, in order to avoid delaying their implementation.

53. If peace was not simply the absence of war, but rather a dynamic process of co-operation among peoples, the time seemed ripe for the members of the international community to combine their efforts to bring relief to refugees throughout the world.

54. Mr. MUTUALE (Zaire) said that the determination and the wise policy adopted by the High Commissioner held out hope of a better future for the 15 million refugees awaiting durable solutions to their problems and he assured the High Commissioner of the Zairian Government's full support.

55. The issues on the agenda of the extraordinary session of the Executive Committee were of the greatest importance, and if they were to be settled, it would be necessary to show a keen sense of responsibility. The solution to refugee problems indeed depended on the financial resources available, but it also depended on the political will of the members of the international community, without which it was impossible to surmount all the hurdles and to prevent the conquests of humanitarian law from being jeopardized by the current economic problems.

56. His delegation had endeavoured to participate actively in the work of the Temporary Working Group and associated itself fully with the consensus that had emerged on its report, but wished to make a number of observations regarding the cut-backs in budgets and programmes. In doing so, it drew on the experience of Zaire which, since acceding to independence, had always considered itself bound to admit asylum-seekers. Zaire intended to uphold that tradition while complying with its obligations under international instruments in force. In January 1990, it had admitted a further 25,000 refugees in addition to the 345,000 already on its territory. Unfortunately, only 40,000 of them were receiving assistance from the Office of the High Commissioner.

57. The Government of Zaire was doing its utmost to promote harmonious relations with all countries in the region. In that spirit, it had participated in the Quadripartite Conference on the voluntary repatriation of Burundi refugees, held in Butare, Rwanda, in October 1988 at the invitation of the Government of Rwanda. In its domestic policy, Zaire had also made considerable efforts, that were reflected in the stability and peace that reigned throughout the country, to curb the departure of its citizens. In April 1990, in the interests of developing democracy, a multi-party system and trade-union pluralism had been introduced in Zaire and it had been decided to review the Constitution in order to define a new youth and employment-training policy. Those measures had all stimulated the movement towards repatriation, proving that in the last analysis the problems of refugees were inseparably linked to overall national development.

58. With regard to the report of the Temporary Working Group, his delegation particularly supported the proposal made in paragraph (dd) on page 25 of the report concerning the creation of a "Special Trust Fund that would be jointly managed by UNDP and UNHCR, a Fund to which Governments would be invited to make voluntary contributions especially from their non-humanitarian budgets". It hoped that the measures recommended by the Working Group would help to promote respect for the right of refugees to life, security and well-being, in a spirit of international solidarity.

59. Mr. EL GHALI BENHIMA (Morocco) expressed his gratitude to all those who had helped to prepare the report of the Working Group; the report was a valuable contribution to the efforts to find a suitable solution to the problems of refugees and to the serious financial difficulties of the Office of the High Commissioner. He hoped that the keener awareness of that dual concern would lead to a collective commitment and to the strengthening of international solidarity. It would be deplorable if the survival of millions of refugees were to be jeopardized by budgetary cut-backs caused by the lack of resources.

60. To enable the international community to meet the needs of refugees on the basis of humanitarian and equitable burden-sharing, an appeal had to be made to traditional donors, as well as to the generosity of potential donors. The host countries and countries of first asylum, and particularly the African countries, could not be required to make a further effort. The sacrifices they had already made had seriously undermined their development programmes and their precarious economic and social situation. Consequently, his delegation supported the efforts made by the High Commissioner to mobilize additional resources.

61. He was gratified at the consensus that was emerging on the adoption of the Working Group's report and hoped that the recommendations it contained would be implemented in a constructive manner, bearing in mind the need to reconcile the interests of refugees with efficiency on the part of UNHCR. That efficiency should be reflected in flawless protection for refugees and by assistance measures that benefited refugees alone. As part of its rationalization exercise, UNHCR should not only identify the needs of the most vulnerable categories of refugees, but also ensure that the assistance provided met humanitarian requirements fully.

62. Mr. MKWANAZI (Observer for the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania) commended the High Commissioner on his efforts to alleviate the situation of refugees but regretted that he was not always able, due to constraints of time, to visit refugees personally, as some of his predecessors had done, since those visits were a valuable source of encouragement and hope in particularly trying circumstances for the refugees themselves and for the host countries.

63. The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania congratulated the Namibian activists on successfully freeing their country and securing the right to self-determination for their people. It hoped that an independent Namibia would continue to fight for the just cause of freedom and expressed its gratitude to all those countries that had generously received and protected the victims of the heinous apartheid régime, as well as all donor countries, in particular Norway and the other Nordic countries, which had given generous support to UNHCR's activities on their behalf. The front-line States had made a considerable material and political contribution to combating the racist régime, occasionally at heavy cost. For example, the Republic of Botswana had recently been the victim of acts of aggression committed by agents of the racist régime who had committed murders and ransacked dwellings. The populations of the neighbouring States, who lived under constant threat from that régime, had always resisted courageously and kept their faith in justice. The Government of Tanzania had generously offered refugees land which they had developed with the assistance of UNHCR and of other agencies.

64. The CHAIRMAN said that if he heard no objection he would take it that following its consideration of agenda item 4, the Executive Committee wished to adopt the report of the Temporary Working Group (A/AC.96/742) by consensus.

It was so decided.

65. The CHAIRMAN said that he was gratified that it had been possible to adopt the report by consensus. He believed that its recommendations would provide a sound basis for the future activities of UNHCR and of the Executive Committee. The Office of the High Commissioner would ensure that the report was widely distributed to all Governments and agencies, institutions and non-governmental organizations concerned.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Extraordinary session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 450th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 29 May 1990, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. DANNENBRING (Federal Republic of Germany)

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(a) Review of requirements for General Programmes in 1990 and Projections for 1991

(b) Review of projected overall programme activities in 1990 and the status of funding

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GE.90-01417/1948B

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

(a) REVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS FOR GENERAL PROGRAMMES IN 1990 AND PROJECTIONS FOR 1991

(b) REVIEW OF PROJECTED OVERALL PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES IN 1990 AND THE STATUS OF FUNDING (agenda item 5) (A/AC.96/743, 744, 745; A/AC.96/ESC/CRP.2, 3)

1. The CHAIRMAN introduced the item and drew attention to document A/AC.96/ESC/CRP.2, emphasizing that the item was one of the most important before the extraordinary session. The Executive Committee had a mandate to authorize levels of obligations under General Programmes for the second half of 1990. It had been entrusted with that task in order to avoid a repetition of the need to absorb a deficit from the previous year. He noted in particular that the budgeted figure for General Programmes had been revised downwards.

2. Mr. STAFFORD (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees) said that following the authorization by the Executive Committee of a ceiling of $190 million for General Programme expenditures for the first half of 1990, UNHCR had reviewed all its programmes in order to bring the level of delivery of protection and assistance measures below that prescribed ceiling while at the same time absorbing the 1989 deficit. UNHCR had therefore started 1990 with a 12-month General Programme budget of $340 million.

3. After the 1990 annual target review, a revised figure of $379 million, which included the $38 million deficit carried over from 1989, was proposed. The figure of $379 million needed to be viewed in the context of three factors: the $414 million originally proposed for the 1990 General Programme, the $387 million which represented the actual level of 1989 expenditure for the General Programme and the initial target of $330 million for the 1991 General Programme. Those figures clearly showed a budgetary and expenditure decrease which UNHCR would make every effort to maintain, refugee needs permitting. The very substantial efforts being made by UNHCR, which involved a review of staffing levels and measures to economize on other costs, such as travel, overtime, consultancies and general operating expenses, were also yielding meaningful results that were reflected in the revised budget estimates.

4. The estimated figure of $735 million for total programme needs for 1990 had been cut to $672 million, while income for all programmes was projected at $550 million. Those figures left an income gap of $82 million, taking into account the $40 million balances carried forward from 1989. In order to bridge that gap UNHCR had reviewed its funding recommendations on the basis of priority needs.

5. Despite a limited shortfall of $8.6 million for the General Programmes, that should be covered by some 1990 programme slippage, and delays to some Special Programmes, the plan should ensure that priorities continued to be respected and emphasis squarely placed on the General Programme. The lack of assurances in respect of funding constituted a major flaw in the system, although UNHCR was best able to provide an informed opinion on its funding on the basis of indications received from donors as to their possible

contributions, thus allowing a well thought-out estimate of the likely cverall income to be made. On the basis of patterns of past contributions, the planning figure for 1990 was $550 million, a marginal increase of 3 per cent over the previous year.

6. The funding allocations of between $370 and $380 million for General Programme activities were by no means unrealistic if the figure for 1988-1989 contributions of $325 million was increased by expected secondary income earnings, a modest reallocation of funds from Special to General Programmes and a projected $20 million in new additional contributions. Some donors had already made known their intentions to make additional resources available which UNHCR would like to be attributed, in priority, to the General Programmes and it seemed likely that at least $20 million in additional resources would be available before the end of 1990.

7. UNHCR would undoubtedly continue to suffer from financial difficulties if nothing was done to address the highly unpredictable nature of UNHCR's funding. To embark on a new programme year with only one quarter to one third of the required resources, in the form of pledges rather than cash in hand, struck him as being highly speculative, rather than the sound financial management the Executive Committee and UNHCR deserved. He was determined to review the manner in which UNHCR was funded within the mechanism of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

8. After stripping programmes down to a minimum, UNHCR still did not know whether sufficient financial resources would be available to enable it to perform its mission. The considerable efforts undertaken, in terms of structural changes made at Headquarters, review of the field establishment, staff reduction and rational fund utilization should be balanced against the needs of refugees.

9. Time was to implement those measures and the confidence of the Executive Committee was required to enable UNHCR to get on with the task of protecting and providing assistance to the millions of refugees for whom it had been made responsible. Accordingly, he requested that the extraordinary session of the Executive Committee should approve the budget of $378.9 million for its 1990 General Programmes.

10. Mr. LYMAN (United States of America) indicated his country's support for a 1990 General Programme budget of $378 million which, he understood, would make it possible to liquidate the previous year's $38 million deficit and to balance the books by the end of 1990. His country's remaining reservations in no way detracted from its support for the leadership and staff of UNHCR.

11. His delegation would like the budget to indicate country and line-item levels; future Executive Committee decisions on budget matters must be based on the level of budgetary information. Such detail would induce donors not to earmark contributions within the General Programmes since they would know that certain high-priority programmes, were included fully within the total. The information provided had not dispelled his delegation's concern about whether sufficient funds had been allocated to countries where the bulk of refugees resided, and it endorsed the proposal by the Nordic countries that developed countries should finance refugee resettlement and related costs in their countries, leaving UNHCR to focus only on legal protection; that would free substantial funds for first-asylum countries in Asia, Africa and Central America.

12. His delegation hoped that it would be possible to restore to the 1991 budget some of the worthwhile activities that would have to be cancelled or deferred in 1990; it would be helpful if the 1991 budget clearly identified such desirable activities and their additional costs. An increase in United States support for refugee assistance in 1991 had been requested from the Congress which it was hoped would help such items to be restored.

13. His delegation fully supported the steps being taken to reduce administrative costs, especially by staff reductions. It stressed the need to ensure that staff reductions were not detrimental to the enhanced technical support, training and emergency response services developed in recent years which enabled UNHCR to forestall the crises that had beset refugee camps in the past.

14. His delegation felt obliged to point out that some of the impact of the current crisis described in document A/AC.96/744 was attributable to a lack of prioritization and of technical management rather than to a shortage of funds. It recognized that the present budget would not fulfil the common objectives of the Executive Committee in respect of assistance to refugees. However, full implementation of all the recommendations of the Temporary Working Group would go a long way towards overcoming the crisis. Those recommendations fell into four categories: increased income from traditional and new donors; improved conditions of service delivery in countries of asylum; greater inter-agency co-operation; cost effective management by UNHCR.

15. In conclusion his delegation supported the proposed budget but urged careful consideration of the issues it had outlined.

16. Mr. MARTIUS (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his country accepted the General Programmes target of $378.9 million as realistic and appreciated the difficult and sometimes painful measures that had been required to reach that figure. However, the high level of support costs which amounted to 36 per cent of programme activities continued to cause concern and further economies appeared to be required in that area.

17. The changes in Central and Eastern Europe had led, in the first four months of 1990, to a total inflow of over 350,000 asylum-seekers, ethnic Germans and citizens of the German Democratic Republic into the Federal Republic of Germany. Despite the tremendous strain on its budgetary resources caused by the large numbers of new arrivals, the Federal Republic of Germany would, subject to parliamentary approval, double its regular contribution to UNHCR's General Programmes from DM 8 million to DM 16 million.

18. His Government was convinced that improved economic effectiveness in the area of support costs would release funds for direct assistance to refugees, and would make for a lasting improvement of UNHCR's financial situation. It was also convinced that future programme targets would have to be realistically prepared, thus ruling out the need for downward revisions later on.

19. Mr. HYNNINEN (Finland) said that his delegation had noted with pleasure that internal measures already taken by the High Commissioner were in line with the recommendations of the Temporary Working Group.

20. All parties had to contribute to a solution of UNHCR's financial problems. Financial support was necessary, but the granting of asylum and the political will to address the underlying reasons for refugee movements were of primary importance. His delegation was gratified by the initiatives taken by the High Commissioner not only in the financial and humanitarian but also the political aspects of UNHCR activities and expressed Finland's support for him in his endeavours to tackle the root causes of the refugee problem.

21. His delegation recognized the need for greater predictability to allow UNHCR to carry out its mandate, and recommended that further attention be devoted to multi-year budgeting and pledging.

22. The General Programme budget for 1990 was a reasonable one, and it was acceptable to Finland. However, all UNHCR activities should be carried out within available funds and work to improve UNHCR's administration and operations must be continued in order to avoid shortfalls in coming years.

23. Although Finland had a population of only 5 million, it had more than doubled its contribution towards UNHCR in 1989, bringing its share of UNHCR's total funding to 4 per cent, and had further increased its contribution in 1990. The 1990 contribution of $14 million already contained an increase of $5 million. However, in view of the special appeals of the High Commissioner and the Chairman of the Executive Committee, Finland had made available $6.5 million in the spring and had recently decided to grant a further $6.8 million to UNHCR, bringing its total contributions to over $27 million. His delegation urged other donors to follow suit; a concerted effort by all was the best way of persuading traditional donors to maintain a high level of contributions in the future.

24. Mr. AASLU (Norway) emphasized that the true burden-sharing required to resolve refugee problems was not just a matter of increasing contributions, and that the manner in which resources were spent was equally important.

25. In addition to the Nkr 80 million announced at the pledging conference in New York in November 1989, and already paid in full, Norway had paid an additional Nkr 30 million to alleviate the difficult situation of the General Programmes. Norway's contribution for 1990 was expected to amount to Nkr 156 million, the equivalent of $25 million, or almost $6 per capita. Norway hoped that others would follow up with similar increased contributions.

26. It felt that priority should be given to activities within the General Programmes, although Norwegian contributions might also be directed towards Special Programme activities, in close consultation with UNHCR.

27. Lastly, his delegation congratulated the Deputy High Commissioner on his convincing and clear statement and endorsed the revised General Programme budget of $378.9 million.

28. Mr. GROTH (Sweden) said that the adoption of the report of the Temporary Working Group constituted a scund basis for addressing the increasing needs of refugees throughout the world and illustrated the value of multilateral approaches to global issues such as that of refugees. As an indication of its preparedness to share the burden, Sweden would contribute Skr 30 million, or approximately $5 million in earmarked funds, to the UNHCR General Programmes

and Skr 50 million or approximately $8.2 million to specific programmes in consultation with UNHCR, in addition to its previous core contribution of $24.2 million, bringing its total contribution for 1990 to approximately $37.5 million. In addition, it was giving favourable consideration to a substantive contribution to the CIREFCA process in Central America.

29. The protection of refugees was one of a number of global problems that lent itself to multilateral approaches. However, UNHCR did not exist in a vacuum, and required joint efforts by all Governments as well as non-governmental organizations and other entities in order to carry out its mission successfully.

30. Mr. LARSEN (Denmark) said that his Government was very concerned about the financial crisis of UNHCR and its impact on the High Commissioner's capability to implement effectively the necessary assistance programmes for refugees around the world. Denmark was ready to make substantial financial contributions in 1990 on the basis of the consensus on the reform process, UNHCR's serious financial situation and its confidence in the UNHCR leadership. It had tried to respond positively to the High Commissioner's various appeals for increased contributions and early announcements of them. The ordinary Danish contribution of Dkr 75 million to UNHCR's general resources had been paid early in January 1990 to help alleviate the difficult liquidity situation of UNHCR at that time. In addition, his Government was planning to make earmarked contributions in the order of Dkr 110 million to high-priority General and Special Programmes. That would bring his country's 1990 contributions to the same high level as for the previous year at about Dkr 185 million, or some $28 million at current exchange rates.

31. Furthermore, he wished to announce that his Government had obtained the necessary approval from Parliament to make a separate disbursement to UNHCR's general resources for 1990 in the amount of $US 5.5 million. Denmark trusted that the announcement of special financial efforts would stimulate major contributions from others able to assist in the difficult situation. Lastly, he wished to indicate his Government's approval of the proposed revised budget of $378.9 million for 1990.

32. Mr. SHANNON (Canada) said that it was a matter of considerable concern to his country that UNHCR's financial situation remained very serious but he wished to make it plain that Canada's main preoccupation was for the refugees themselves. All efforts should be aimed at ensuring that the largest possible proportion of UNHCR resources went directly to the benefit of refugees. His delegation had therefore welcomed the statement by the High Commissioner outlining his six-point strategy for the better use of resources and the reorganization of UNHCR. Several aspects of his plan echoed specific Canadian concerns.

33. New funding had not been forthcoming from non-traditional donors, and UNHCR therefore continued to rely on a relatively narrow group of traditional donors who had been contributing some 90 per cent of its budget. His delegation strongly supported the idea of broadening UNHCR's sources of income and would assist the High Commissioner's efforts to the extent possible, but in the short term it was necessary to be realistic in assessing prospects for new funding. The High Commissioner's strategy to provide more responsive, more targeted and effective programmes met public expectations and should help the office to adapt systematically to the financial realities. In that

connection, his Government was ready to pursue with UNHCR the development of a strategy for raising private funds in Canada. It was, however, concerned that the office had resorted to indiscriminate across-the-board cuts, rather than concentrating resources on essential activities. That could be avoided by better organization and priority-setting.

34. Canada would continue to support strongly the humanitarian work of UNHCR and expected to provide $22 million in 1990. That represented a 30 per cent increase over the previous year and would be committed in the anticipation of reforms, both those already announced and others which it trusted would follow.

35. His country was a major contributor to UNHCR. To put that assistance in context, he wished to underscore the level of Canada's total expenditure on behalf of refugees, which had risen over the past decade to well over $500 million annually. That figure, almost equivalent to the total income received by UNHCR in 1989, included $90 million in contributions in cash and in food aid to UNHCR, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations assisting refugees and displaced persons; $150 million in assistance to nearly 40,000 refugees or persons in humanitarian categories admitted to Canada each year; $60 million for the Canadian refugee determination system; and over $200 million for other related costs, including integration and social assistance costs.

36. Lastly, he wished to state that his delegation could, with some reservations, accept the proposed target for UNHCR's fund-raising efforts and its provisional 1990 budget figure subject to the Executive Committee's decision that there must be no carry-over of a 1990 deficit into 1991.

37. Mr. BADIA (Italy) said that his country's contribution to 1990 General Programmes should be at least at the same level as for the previous year, in terms of national currency, and would represent a large percentage of the overall Italian contribution to UNHCR. In addition to the contributions already announced to Special Programmes, his Government was ready to consider further special appeals which might arise as a consequence of emergency situations. Mention should also be made of additional assistance by Italy to refugees through channels other than UNHCR, including support to the Prodere project for Central America in the context of the CIREFCA programme, for which a total disbursement of $15.6 million was anticipated. His Government was also seriously considering the possibility of making a further contribution of several million dollars to the World Food Programme.

38. His delegation wished to assure the High Commissioner of Italy's intention to be of as much assistance as possible in the current financial crisis. The downward revision of the target for 1990 was already substantial and the High Commissioner, was not in a position to do more. But it was equally fair to say that the assistance budgets of donor Governments were taxed so heavily from all quarters that the financing of that level of projected expenditure would require considerable efforts from all possible donors. Meanwhile the High Commissioner, who had made an impressive start, should still strive to effect savings wherever possible in the administrative sector without endangering refugee programmes already suffering from the impact of the financial crisis. Moreover, new avenues of fund-raising should be pursued with determination in order to obtain the additional funds that were so badly needed in the current difficult situation.

39. Mr. HEWITT (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had been impressed by the determination and vigour which the High Commissioner and his Deputy had shown since taking up their appointments at a difficult time in UNHCR's history. Moreover, it had been grateful for the regular and detailed briefings provided by UNHCR on the cost of programme activities and the level of expected income, and hoped that close co-operation would continue.

40. In submitting a revised target of $378.9 million for General Programmes, UNHCR had set itself an ambitious target considering that the maximum level of contributions had previously never exceeded $323 million, and even taking into account estimated secondary income and the possible switch of some funds from Special Programmes. However, having noted the High Commissioner's assurances that the budget was a realistic one, his delegation was prepared to endorse it on the basis that, first, the deficit of $38 million carried over from 1989 would be absorbed by year end; and second, that UNHCR would live within the ceiling of $378.9 million with no deficit carry-over into 1991. It also looked to UNHCR to monitor income and expenditure particularly carefully in the months ahead. If it became clear that income assumptions would not be met, programme budgets would need to be adjusted correspondingly. His delegation urged that staff reductions and other rationalization measures under consideration should be implemented as swiftly as possible to safeguard direct assistance to refugees, and it welcomed those measures which had already been taken by the High Commissioner.

41. The United Kingdom would continue to be a major and reliable supporter of UNHCR's work and contributed generously both to its core budget and to its appeals for refugee assistance in all parts of the world. During the past decade its level of funding had increased significantly and in 1988 and 1989 had averaged approximately $35 million per annum for General and Special Programmes. At such an early stage in the financial year, it was not possible to confirm the total amount his country expected to contribute in 1990, but it hoped to reach at least the average level of the past two years. Some $22 million had so far been committed.

42. While the focus of the session was inevitably on the General Programmes, for which his Government had announced core support of some $6.8 million, an increase of 11 per cent over 1989, the Executive Committee should not forget the importance of many of the Special Programme appeals which sought the implementation of durable solutions or were of major humanitarian significance, such as the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees. The United Kingdom had already pledged close to $15.5 million for Special Programmes in 1990 and was considering what further assistance it could provide. The above figures took no account of the substantial contribution his country made to the European Community's assistance to UNHCR and to British non-governmental organizations working with UNHCR on refugee projects, or of assistance in dealing with the problems facing Hong Kong.

43. Both donor and refugee hosting countries shared a common interest in ensuring that the maximum amount of income was spent on direct refugee assistance. Staffing represented a very high proportion of administrative costs, and his delegation was therefore pleased to note UNHCR's confirmation that the target of returning to the staffing level of 1 January 1986 would be reached or surpassed by the end of 1990. The savings that would accrue would not, of course, have much impact before 1991.

44. The Working Group had suggested in paragraph 41(m) of its report (A/AC.96/742) that UNHCR should explore the possibilities of enhanced use of Junior Professional Officers. He was pleased to announce that the United Kingdom would shortly sign a joint memorandum of understanding with UNHCR on the employment of such officers and hoped to have a first candidate in place very soon thereafter.

45. The Working Group's report also drew attention to the absence of any regular procedure to review and rationalize the location of UNHCR offices in the field. His delegation noted that a number of offices which had outlived their usefulness were being considered for closure and it looked forward to a report on that matter at the next Executive Committee meeting. Closing an office was not the only means of ensuring the most effective use of available staff resources. In some European offices the ease of modern communications might enable some functions to be carried out by Headquarters staff or staff in neighbouring countries visiting as the need arose. That possibility merited further study. In addition, UNHCR would have to keep a tight rein on travel and other support costs. Careful monitoring in that area would be an important task for the new Comptroller and programme planning division.

46. His delegation had read with great care the Note on the Impact of the Financial Crisis on UNHCR Activities (A/AC.96/744). Continual drastic programme revisions could not be in the interests of UNHCR, sensible planning or the refugees themselves. Until resources matched all the needs which UNHCR had identified, the only responsible way to budget was on the basis of a realistic expectation of income, ensuring that overriding priority was given to life-saving and life-sustaining activities.

47. His delegation supported all moves to secure funding from non-traditional donors or the private sector and was encouraged that some pilot schemes were under way. It urged the intensification of those efforts with a view to achieving early tangible results. Lastly, his delegation wished to assure the High Commissioner of the full support of the United Kingdom Government in his endeavours to return UNHCR to a sound financial footing and to make it better able to respond to the needs of refugees and to address the difficult challenges of the 1990s. That support would continue to be in deeds and not in words alone.

48. Mr. de RIEDMATTEN (Switzerland) said that his delegation was in favour of the proposed downward revision of the 1990 target for General Programmes by about 18.5 per cent in real terms, as well as the substantial reduction in the budget for Special Programmes, and could therefore join in the consensus which should permit formal approval of that target. A few words of caution were, however, in order.

49. The projected resource level appeared reasonable in the light of recent trends, but the total of $550 million was still only an estimate. While some donors had already been able to confirm that they would maintain their contributions at the same level as in the previous year, or indeed to announce additional contributions, others were not - or not yet - in a position to give such guarantees. Furthermore, it was not certain that donors would all be able to conform, and in sufficient measure, to the priority set for the General Programmes. It was also unclear what would happen if the implementation of new durable solutions through Special Programmes placed further demands on donors' resources.

50. Such uncertainties were the main problem to be resolved in respect of UNHCR's funding mechanisms. In that regard, it was essential to ensure that the level at which UNHCR had been authorized to commit funds corresponded to the level of donors' contributions to the General Programmes. In other words, the crisis must not be perpetuated by allowing a new deficit to occur. The undertaking made by the Executive Committee was both moral and collective. That was its weakness, but it could also be its strength.

51. His country's contributions for 1990, as already indicated to the High Commissioner, would be of the same order as for 1988, at between SwF 20 million and SwF 22 million, placing it among the major donors. Switzerland would certainly consider providing additional contributions towards the end of the year, but those would be limited. Thus, it would not be able to make the same extraordinary effort as in December 1989, when it had increased its contributions for that year by nearly 50 per cent to SwF 32 million. Nevertheless, his Government would be in a position to increase the non-earmarked portion of its contribution from SwF 8 million to SwF 8.5 million. With regard to specially earmarked contributions, it was in permanent contact with programme funding services with a view to conforming to the priorities indicated by UNHCR. It was also endeavouring to reserve the food aid it allocated to UNHCR to specific needs that were difficult to meet.

52. Mr. STRUYE de SWIELANDE (Belgium) said that his Government fully supported the strategy outlined by the High Commissioner and trusted that it would be pursued with vigour. It had no difficulty in joining the consensus on the report of the Temporary Working Group, but felt that the measures proposed were only a first step and that other, more substantial reforms would be necessary. In that regard, several issues merited attention. First, it would be sensible to establish a body within the framework of the Executive Committee to address the problem of the unpredictability of income levels. Second, the distinction between General Programmes and Special Programmes was questionable, particularly as the conventions relating to refugees made no reference to "special" as opposed to "general" refugees. A global presentation of UNHCR's budget was long overdue. Likewise, the earmarking of funds for different categories of refugees was incompatible with the spirit of the Convention. On the other hand, it was time to heed the much-repeated calls to make a clear distinction between the Headquarters and field budgets. Lastly, it would be advisable to set aside 10 per cent of the UNHCR budget for exceptional operations that might be necessitated by new and unforeseeable emergency situations.

53. His delegation endorsed the downward revision of the target for 1990 to $378.9 million and had no difficulty in approving the proposed overall budget. The High Commissioner could count on the continued support of the Belgian Government, which was increasing its contribution to the General Programmes by 15 per cent for the current year.

54. Mr. LEVITTE (France) said that his country would lend its resolute support to UNHCR, which had a unique responsibility in providing protection and assistance to all the 15 million people who today depended entirely on the international community for their survival and their future. That support went to all the exceptionally devoted staff of UNHCR and especially to the High Commissioner, whose strategy in the current difficult period of restructuring could be endorsed unreservedly. France welcomed in particular

the High Commissioner's efforts to find new contributors, and for that reason had assigned a large part of its contribution to UNHCR action in that area.

55. His delegation also favoured the strengthening of co-operation between UNHCR and the other United Nations agencies on two conditions: first, that UNHCR should maintain its responsibilities particularly in the field of protection; and, second, that such co-operation should make use of additional resources to ensure that asylum countries were not the victims, but rather the beneficiaries, of that co-operation. His delegation would elaborate on that point in the Governing Council of UNDP, which had just begun its work in Geneva. In that spirit, France had decided to allocate F 6.5 million out of its contribution to UNDP for 1990 to the implementation of joint UNDP/UNHCR projects in Central America under the CIREFCA programme.

56. His Government's contributions to UNHCR had increased six-fold between 1987 and 1989 and he was pleased to confirm that in 1990 its contribution would again be increased. It was difficult to give an exact figure since, in addition to contributing to the General Programmes, France would participate in the Special Programmes as they were implemented. In that regard, he was happy to announce that his Government had decided to provide an additional F 1.5 million to fund three UNHCR programmes in favour of the boat people. France, which in the previous year had allocated F 1 billion to support refugees in its own territory, supported UNHCR more than ever before.

57. Mr. IJUIN (Japan) said that his Government endorsed the efforts by UNHCR to deal with its current financial crisis, which thus far showed no signs of improving. The downward revision of the target for 1990 seemed unavoidable because of that crisis, although refugee needs were constantly increasing. It hoped that additional contributions by the end of the year would be sufficient to meet that target. Perhaps the best way to relieve anxiety as to whether the figure of $378.9 million was realistic would be to monitor the situation carefully through the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters.

58. His Government had contributed $73.8 million to UNHCR in 1989, an amount which represented 14.6 per cent of the Office's total receipts. In addition, it had provided $19 million since the beginning of the current year out of its 1989/90 fiscal budget. Exact figures for its 1990 contribution could not yet be given because the 1990/91 budget was still subject to Parliamentary approval, but he could give the assurance of his Government's continued support to UNHCR action for humanitarian causes.

59. Mrs. RUESTA DE FURTER (Venezuela) endorsed the High Commissioner's six-pillar strategy as well as his proposed plan for restructuring UNHCR to make it more efficient.

60. According to the Statute of UNHCR, the work of the High Commissioner was humanitarian and social; her delegation feared that the Office was losing sight of that social role. It believed that in the present period of financial crisis, well planned and social action would ensure that the financial resources were substantially increased. Her delegation felt that the programme budget should be formulated according to need and then adjusted to the actual income obtained. With respect to the international protection that refugees should receive, it noted with greatest concern the cases of réfoulement, expulsion, extradition, detention in inhuman conditions, which were all paradoxical at a time when respect for human rights was being promoted.

61. Venezuela was a country of asylum and had no refugees. It encouraged the peace process in Latin America and in so doing addressed the root cause of the refugee problem. It approved the proposed budget submitted to the extraordinary session on the understanding that it was a crisis budget. Her delegation thanked the asylum countries and the large contributors that enabled the UNHCR to continue its work and assured the High Commissioner of Venezuela's support.

62. Mr. WALKER (Australia) said that he applauded the clarity and directness of the statements made by the High Commissioner and the Deputy High Commissioner. He welcomed and endorsed the efforts and the decision to reconcile income and needs and appreciated the difficulty of the decision which the High Commissioner and his Office had been forced to make.

63. It was necessary to ensure the protection of refugees to enable them to live in dignity. However, the phenomenon of mass migration could not be ignored. It was not Australia's policy to exclude settlers from any country but it was concerned that the facilities provided for refugees should not be overwhelmed by people who claimed refugee status simply to migrate for economic reasons. The international cost was enormous and the amounts spent by countries in some cases far exceeded UNHCR's entire budget on people who were not refugees. It was, therefore, important that UNHCR should help in dealing with those issues and he strongly supported the work done through the informal consultations on asylum-seekers.

64. The international community together with UNHCR needed to address the problem of durable solutions and the causes of refugee outflow. Australia looked forward to participating in the Working Group on Protection and Durable Solutions and attached great value to the pioneering work done in the Division of Refugee Law and Doctrine on that issue.

65. In order to discharge its mandate, UNHCR had to match its efforts to its available resources. His delegation attached great importance to the assurances given that the previous year's deficit would be absorbed and that there would be no carry-over from 1990 into 1991. His delegation was not in a position to make any new statement during the current budget cycle but welcomed the important additional contributions that had been announced. It recognized the very generous effort by countries of first asylum which shouldered heavy economic burdens. Countries like Australia also bore the burden of local settlement, repatriation and resettlement. It felt strongly that, in the case of developed countries the cost of resettlement should not be charged to UNHCR's resources. His delegation would shortly submit a draft conclusion which drew on the work of the Temporary Working Group, the six pillars announced by the High Commissioner and many of the statements made in the meeting.

66. The CHAIRMAN noted that there appeared to be a consensus in favour of the draft conclusions and decisions on assistance activities - General Programmes submitted by the High Commissioner in document A/AC.96/ES/CRP.3. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Executive Committee wished to adopt those conclusions and decisions.

67. It was so decided.

68. Mr. BRANJDRUP (International Council for Voluntary Agencies) said that in the discussions on the financial crisis facing UNHCR, donor Governments were singled out. The argument was put forward that if UNHCR increased its efficiency and donor countries increased their contributions the financial crisis would be solved. The non-governmental organizations had a different view, however. Donors consisted of two main groups: industrialized countries which contributed funds and other countries, mainly third world countries, which granted inter alia asylum and land, and shared their meagre resources and protected refugees by applying the provisions of the Convention. The contributions made by the second group were not easily quantifiable but came very close to the limits of their capacity.

69. One of the reasons for the present financial crisis was that the principle of burden-sharing between these groups had not been reviewed when the economic situation of the third world countries to which most of the countries of asylum belonged had worsened dramatically. If the industrialized countries did not take on an increased share of the burden, there would be greater migration of refugees and heightened pressure on first asylum countries to take deterrent measures. The non-governmental organizations firmly believed that the developed countries should increase their share of the total cost of helping refugees and review the manner of channelling their contributions. Sufficient resources should be given to UNHCR to enable it to fulfil its statutory role especially in the area of protection and means should be also given to other agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, IFAD and the World Bank to enable them to help refugees, returnees and displaced persons.

70. Any country granting asylum to a large number of refugees should receive immediate assistance from UNHCR and be offered technical assistance from the United Nations special agencies to meet those new needs. Structural changes were therefore required in several United Nations agencies on the lines of those recently taken in WHO. Those views expressed were in accordance with some of the recommendations on burden-sharing among relevant United Nations agencies made by the Working Group. He realized that such recommendations would take years to implement but in the long run they would permit refugee needs to be covered by government services in the same way as those of nationals and relieve the financial demands on UNHCR.

71. With respect to UNHCR's current financial crisis and solutions to refugee problems, the non-governmental organizations wished to encourage Governments to follow the principle of meeting the vital needs of refugees and not to tailor their refugee programmes to the allocations they were prepared to make. UNHCR had originally projected a budget for the 1990 general programme at $414 million but later, in the face of the financial crisis and under pressure from donor Governments, it had been reduced to $341 million. However, to date, Governments had not yet pledged their contributions to meet even those minimum needs. It appeared that major contributors were not prepared to help to maintain adequate levels of assistance to increasing numbers of refugees. Since 10 of the contributors provided 86 per cent of UNHCR budget, non-governmental organizations felt that there was obvious potential for widening the donor base. Present donors should continue to give generously, cease cutbacks and enable UNHCR financially and politically to initiate durable solutions and take advantage of the opportunities that existed for large-scale voluntary repatriation.

72. He drew attention to the growing fear that less priority might be given to the vast problems of third world countries where the most serious refugee under asylum problems occurred. There were millions of refugees in countries of first asylum who would not be able to return or to be resettled elsewhere and needed assistance from international agencies to survive in refugee camps. According to UNHCR, as many as 25,000 refugee children under five years of age were suffering from acute malnutrition, which made them more vulnerable to communicable diseases. Cutbacks also resulted in reduced buffer stocks, health projects being affected, poor water supply, reduction of school construction and of investment in income-generating projects. On account of the shortfall, which began with the operating deficit in 1989 HCR's programme, resources had been wiped out in 1990. The non-governmental organizations urged donor Governments to end the shortfall and to allocate part of their contributions to replenishing a programme reserve fund to enable UNHCR to carry out vital contingency planning.

73. When UNHCR programmes were cut, pressure was then placed on the non-governmental organizations which had no funds to make up shortfalls. He requested that, in future, if UNHCR was forced to make cuts, it should do so in close consultation with the non-governmental organizations.

74. Mr. ACHE (Chairman, UNHCR Staff Council) said that it was appropriate to place the concern over continuing post reductions and the retrenchment exercise in the wider context of the financial crisis. The consequences of the crisis on UNHCR's ability to respond to the needs of refugees were felt by UNHCR staff in the field and at Headquarters. For UNHCR staff who lived with the day-to-day realities of their work, the effect on morale had been devastating. While accepting the principle that the staffing level should be adapted to changing requirements and realities, the Staff Council was concerned at the lack of transparency in the implementation of the exercise. Since 1987, some 400 posts had apparently been discontinued and also an undetermined number of posts had been created. However, the Staff Council had been unable to ascertain which staff members had lost their jobs as a result and what criteria had been used in the process. The recruitment freeze instituted by the current management was fully supported by the Staff Council.

75. Further discontinuations were contemplated by the end of 1990. It was gratifying that the High Commissioner had decided to use internal resources to carry out the task of the ongoing field and Headquarters staffing review. However, the question rose of whether that was the end of the process, whether the purpose of the exercise was to reduce the number of posts to 2,074 or whether it was intended to determine operational requirements for protecting and assisting refugees according to the High Commissioner's mandate or to produce administrative saving. The magnitude of the task of implementing a massive retrenchment exercise within a very short period of time called for the understanding and support of the Executive Committee in order to enable the High Commissioner to minimize the effects of retrenchment on the staff. The Staff Council therefore proposed that the necessary financial support should be given to the High Commissioner to implement the most humane measures, where separation of staff was inevitable. The Staff Council also requested the Executive Committee's support to ensure that former UNHCR staff were given the preference for appointment to posts within the United Nations system and the specialized agencies and that they would enjoy priority in filling future contingency posts within UNHCR. The Staff Council would also

welcome suggestions in that context from the Executive Committee, particularly in respect of staff locally recruited in country-specific programmes and projects in the field.

76. He asked how the three key principles that governed government retrenchment exercises, namely, attrition, redeployment and an implementation time-frame that minimized the effect of post reductions on staff, applied to UNHCR. The scope for attrition was limited, as UNHCR was a relatively young organization. Redeployment possibilities in the field, particularly for local staff, were more difficult and often non-existent. The norm of a three-year time-frame was significantly different from that facing UNHCR. He hoped that the Executive Committee would give due consideration to the scale and specificity of the problem since what was ultimately at stake was the effectiveness of the UNHCR to discharge its mandate. In conclusion, he confirmed the Staff Council's support of the High Commissioner's position on the financial crisis and his recommendations on the six-pillar strategy. The Staff Council also supported the recommendations of the Temporary Working Group contained in document A/AC.90/742 and hoped that the Executive Committee would discuss measures to address the serious concern over reductions in staffing.

77. Mr. STAFFORD (Deputy United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) thanked the Executive Committee members for their constructive comments and in particular for their endorsement of the 1990 budget. Speaking for the High Commissioner and himself, he hoped that transparency would be the byword of the UNHCR. He wanted to meet the Executive Committee regularly and to share information with it as well as to ensure that UNHCR documents were clear enough to avoid any surprises. He thanked the representative of Belgium in particular for his suggestions concerning the pledging exercise, which would enable some idea to be formed of the level of resources. He had heeded the many admonitions concerning another carry-over into 1991.

78. He was particularly grateful for the comments concerning assistance to refugees because that was the main purpose of UNHCR. He noted that the representative of the non-governmental organizations, in particular, had raised points which were of great concern to UNHCR. The UNHCR, as a whole, was gratified by the major announcements concerning contributions. Note had been taken of the clear statements and instructions given, which would be implemented as soon as was possible.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Extraordinary session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 451st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 29 May 1990, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. DANNENBRING (Federal Republic of Germany)

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Review of requirements for General Programmes in 1990 and Projections for 1991

Review of projected overall programme activities in 1990 and the status of funding

Review of major developments concerning refugees in 1990

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GE.90-01428/2003B

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

(a) REVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS FOR GENERAL PROGRAMMES IN 1990 AND PROJECTIONS FOR 1991

(b) REVIEW OF PROJECTED OVERALL PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES IN 1990 AND THE STATUS OF FUNDING

(agenda item 5) (continued) (A/AC.96/737; A/AC.96/743; A/AC.96/744; A/AC.96/745; A/AC.96/ES/CRP.4; A/AC.96/ES/CRP.5)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Executive Committee to consider the draft conclusion on common efforts to mobilize resources (A/AC.96/ES/CRP.4).

2. Mr. BARKER (Australia) said that the draft conclusions summarized the concerns expressed by all the members of the Executive Committee and reflected their common desire to identify comprehensive and durable solutions to refugee problems and ways of channelling the activities of countries and the Office of the High Commissioner so as to avert any new crisis. He hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

3. Mr. HAMDEN (Lebanon) said that he simply wished to state that as far as his delegation was concerned, it was clearly understood that the draft conclusion did not authorize any distinction to be drawn between the various situations in which the Office of the High Commissioner was called to intervene in accordance with its mandate, whether they were international in character or were limited to the territory of one State.

4. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Executive Committee should adopt the draft conclusion published in document A/AC.96/ES/CRP.4 by consensus.

5. It was so decided.

6. The CHAIRMAN invited the Executive Committee to consider the draft conclusion on staffing matters (A/AC.96/ES/CRP.5).

7. Mr. ANELL (Sweden) commented that the document, which his delegation supported, sought to emphasize the fact that although the restructuring and staff reduction measures undertaken by UNHCR were necessary, it was important to assure and preserve staff morale while they were being implemented. He proposed the following minor amendment to the third preambular paragraph: "Aware of the hardship that affected staff members will face as a result of reductions in staffing levels and of the effect such reductions would have on staff morale;".

8. The oral amendment proposed by Sweden was adopted.

9. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Executive Committee should adopt by consensus the draft conclusion published in document A/AC.96/ES/CRP.5, as amended.

10. It was so decided.

11. The CHAIRMAN said that the Executive Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 5.

REVIEW OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING REFUGEES IN 1990 (agenda item 6) (A/AC.96/ES/CRP.1)

12. The CHAIRMAN invited delegations to make their comments on the information on the situation of refugees in the various regions of the world, described in document A/AC.96/ES/CRP.1.

13. Mr. DUARTE (Nicaragua), referring first to the situation in Central America, reminded the Executive Committee that in the course of the previous decade, armed conflicts had forced nearly 2 million people to leave their homes. More than 150,000 of them were considered to be refugees and as such received assistance. But there were also all those who, although satisfying the criteria established, had not applied for assistance or for refugee status. There were also the tens of thousands of refugees who had returned voluntarily to their country of origin (approximately 20,000 in Nicaragua) and who still needed humanitarian assistance.

14. In view of the magnitude of those problems, the Governments of the five Central American countries, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, in their Esquipulas II Declaration of 7 August 1987 had underscored the urgent need to seek the assistance that was vital in order to resolve the refugee problem. Sharing this concern, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the High Commissioner had convened the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) in March 1989. The projects undertaken following the Conference had been implemented remarkably well thanks to the generosity of donors, the participation of the local population and the contribution of the Office of the High Commissioner. In April 1990, the heads of State of the five Central American countries, meeting in Montelimar, Nicaragua, had adopted a new Declaration advocating the implementation of programmes for displaced populations, returnees and refugees in Central America and had called upon the international community to increase its assistance for that purpose. The donor countries should give greater support to the efforts being made by the countries of the region to find durable solutions to refugee problems and also to promote peace and development. His delegation, on behalf of the Nicaraguan Government, would like to thank the Governments of Sweden, Italy and France which had undertaken to continue participating in the funding of assistance activities to refugees conducted in the context of CIREFCA. The Nicaraguan Government was confident that the Office of the High Commissioner, with the assistance of the International Community, would manage to overcome the difficulties caused by the current crisis. It would make its modest contribution to the quest for solutions.

15. Mrs. DOS SANTES (Observer for Angola) reminded the Executive Committee that at its fortieth session, her delegation had drawn attention to the key role played by Angola in the repatriation of some 35,000 Namibian exiles and had noted with satisfaction the launching, two weeks earlier, of an exercise to repatriate simultaneously Zairian refugees and Angolan refugees to their respective countries, under the Tripartite Agreement concluded by UNHCR, the Zairian Government and the Angolan Government. On that occasion, it had requested assistance from the international community to enable the Angolan Government to assure the rehabilitation of displaced persons and returnees. At the time there had been no way of knowing that the financial crisis would bring everything to a halt. Consequently, while those Zairians who wished to return to their country had been repatriated without difficulty, out of

the 35,000 Angolans who wished to return home a mere 6,200 had been able to do so. Despite the appeal made by UNHCR in January 1990, lack of funds had made it necessary to suspend the operation and to leave the thousands of Angolans still in Zaire to their empty existence. Such an injustice made one wonder whether voluntary repatriation was still regarded as the preferred durable solution and whether UNHCR had not been obliged to abandon a policy which it had promoted and for which the Executive Committee had indicated its support in several resolutions.

16. Repatriation operations in Angola have unquestionably been complicated by the war imposed on the country. Nevertheless due to the outstanding efforts of the UNHCR delegation coupled with the will of the returnees themselves, against all odds and on a shoe-string budget, each returnee family had its own plot of land and tools with which to work it, a house, clothing, basic domestic utensils and was eligible for medical care. In April 1991, those families would be self-sufficient and would then cease to be a burden to the international community. But although the Angolan Government had done what was necessary to assist the returnees as well as to plant the seeds of development, it would find it difficult to continue that effort without international assistance.

17. The population of Angola had suffered cruelly from the drought that had been rife in the central and southern provinces of the country and the war waged by UNITA that had forced thousands of Angolans to become displaced persons. Despite those problems, the People's Assembly had enacted, on 27 February 1990, a law guaranteeing fundamental rights for refugees in Angola not only in the area of protection but also in the area of employment, education, residence and freedom of movement. In keeping with its tradition, Angola continued to grant asylum to a large number of refugees.

18. She therefore requested the international community to show generosity in its turn towards the thousands of Angolan refugees still in Zambia, Zaire and Namibia and wishing to return to their homes and to contribute the funds necessary to UNHCR to finance their repatriation, it being understood that after a period of three months from the date of their return the Government of Angola would assume full responsibility for their reintegration.

19. Mr. SAICHEUA (Thailand) said that the major developments concerning refugees in the Asian and Pacific region made it very difficult for him to begin on a positive note. As a first-asylum country, Thailand had shouldered too great a burden for too long a time in upholding a cause which should be the responsibility of all members of the international community. Such a situation could not continue. While appreciating the true worth of the report of the High Commissioner and taking note of some positive trends in South-East Asia, Thailand was compelled to note that, at least as far as it was concerned, improvements were slow in coming and were still unsatisfactory. Having said that, he welcomed the fact that the report mentioned the new problem raised by the influx of Cambodian boat people and that it referred to the need to examine the root causes of the problem of the Vietnamese refugees.

20. Further, the impasse in the implementation of the 1989 Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) was extremely disquieting, and Thailand called upon all countries participating in the extraordinary session to make greater efforts to enable the Plan to be applied in full. A number of measures were required to achieve that end.

21. First, those countries which had ignored the crucial elements of the CPA should promptly review their policy in order to comply with their obligations. Clandestine departures from Viet Nam must be halted and the repatriation of non-refugees who did not volunteer to return to their country of origin should not be blocked any longer. Second, Viet Nam was primarily responsible for resolving the problem of the Vietnamese boat people and for taking more effective measures to ensure that all those who wished to emigrate should do so under the Orderly Departures Programme. Third, the near consensus achieved by the Steering Committee in January on the ending of the moratorium on repatriating non-refugees who did not volunteer to return to their country should be implemented as from 1 July 1990. Fourth, the problem of repatriating non-refugees must be dealt with in order to confer credibility on the status determination procedure and to ensure the CPA's viability. Moreover, any country that opposed the repatriation of non-refugees who did not volunteer to return home should propose an alternative solution, for example, offer to set up on its own territory a regional holding centre for non-refugees, as envisaged in the CPA. Should it prove impossible to arrive at even an intermediate solution to the problem of the Vietnamese boat people, countries of temporary asylum like Thailand would reserve the right to take any measures it deemed necessary in order to safeguard their national interests.

22. The refugee problem in Thailand continued to be very serious both in terms of magnitude and complexity. In November 1989, there were more than 300,000 Cambodian displaced persons in Thailand. In addition, the number of pre-cut-off-date Vietnamese boat people was 10,820 while the post-cut-off-date number stood at 8,766. In the period between January and May 1990, over 3,500 Vietnamese boat people had landed in the country. Further, Thailand had to cope with the problem of the presence of illegal Lao immigrants and an ever increasing number of Cambodian boat people. The Government of Thailand urged the High Commissioner and staff of UNHCR to spare no effort to find a durable solution to the refugee problem in South-East Asia.

23. Mr. ITHETE (Namibia) said that although the repatriation of 41,000 Namibians had been carried out successfully, Namibia was now faced with the enormous problem of reintegrating them into the socio-economic structure of the country. The authorities, and especially the Ministry of Home Affairs were doing everything in their power to assist the returnees, but it was impossible for a Government which only two months old and which had inherited a war-devastated country, with thousands of young people without a job or a home, to settle the problem on its own. That was why Namibia appealed to the international community, and UNHCR in particular, to continue with the rehabilitation programme for Namibian returnees, with the assitance of other United Nations agencies.

24. Before independence, there had been some 50,000 refugees in Namibia. Some of those refugees had managed to integrate themselves into local communities or to go back to their countries of origin when circumstances permitted. The Government had offered the rest of the refugees land suitable for cultivation in the northern part of the country. The Council of Churches in Namibia had agreed to provide the administrative staff to run the settlement zone as well as teachers and nurses. However, UNHCR and other specialized agencies were expected to provide the basic material assistance.

25. His delegation therefore urged UNHCR to retain its office in Windhoek and to assign two or three liaison officers in the north to co-ordinate with the Government on activities related to refugees; it was willing to co-operate fully with UNHCR in finding a lasting solution to the refugee problem in Namibia.

26. Mrs. ESCALER (Observer for the Philippines) noted with appreciation the efforts by UNHCR to assist first asylum countries, including the Philippines. The Goverment of the Philippines, like the High Commisioner, believed that the time had come to tackle the root causes of refugee migrations and to find durable solutions in order to prevent an erosion of the goodwill of the Governments of the countries concerned.

27. The Philippines continued to be a country open to refugees and its Government was willing to accede to all legal instruments for the protection of refugees and to adopt, in co-operation with UNHCR, any solution, even temporary in nature, in order to alleviate the plight of refugees. To that end, the Philippines had sought membership of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's programme.

28. The Philippines continued to implement a policy of providing first asylum, although the camp at Palawan, where 9,072 people were living, was reaching saturation point. The country also hosted a transit centre in Manila and another centre at Morong in Bataan province. A regional resettlement centre, also in Marong, would be ready by the middle of the year. There were, however, limits to the number of asylum seekers who could be admitted by a country like the Philippines, which was already heavily burdened by an onerous external debt as well as the legacy of years of dictatorship. Her delegation therefore fully supported the statement made by the representative of Thailand.

29. At an informal working meeting of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on Indo-Chinese refugees recently held in Manila, the countries of temporary refuge, including the Philippines, had deplored the fact that the 1989 Comprehensive Plan of Action was seriously undermined by the selective implemention of its provisions, regretting in particular the impasse on the question of the duration of a moratorium on mandatory return of non-refugees. At that meeting, the UNHCR representative had referred to the imminent risk of a major tragedy on the high seas, and the countries of temporary refuge had outlined measures to be taken, as enumerated by the representative of Thailand.

30. Her delegation took note of the concern of the High Commissioner that a breakdown of the principle of first asylum in the South-East Asian region could lead to similar occurrences elsewhere, and hoped that his visit to the region would enable him to form a clear idea of the crisis faced by first-asylum countries. In conclusion, she stated that her Government had full and entire confidence in the new High Commissioner.

31. The CHAIRMAN congratulated the Government of the Philippines on the commitment shown by it to the principle of first asylum.

32. Mr. MAHMUD (Pakistan) noted, first of all, that the current session of the Executive Committee was taking place at a crucial time in the history of the world since the hostility and distrust between the super-Powers had been replaced by a spirit of dialogue and understanding over the last year.

Despite the easing of tensions and the developments in Europe, peace and security did not prevail everywhere and zones of tension still existed in various regions, compelling millions of people to flee their countries and to seek refuge abroad. Refugee problems were not confined to the countries of asylum but had a global dimension and therefore required global solutions.

33. The asylum countries, most of which were developing countries, had made considerable sacrifices by admitting refugees, and the widening gap between the needs of refugees and the assistance being extended to them was the reason why the Executive Committee had been convened in extraordinary session. Pakistan considered that UNHCR, as an agency mandated to provide protection and assistance to refugees, should maintain its central role, otherwise there would be chaos and the situation of refugees would deteriorate further.

34. Pakistan was host to almost a quarter of the total case-load of refugees in the world. Most of them came from Afghanistan, although recently arrivals had been reported from Jammu and Kashmir. The measures that the Executive Committee would adopt were therefore of deep concern to Pakistan, which emphasized that austerity measures should not be at the expense of relief assistance programmes in the asylum countries.

35. Although some small-scale spontaneous repatriation of Afghan refugees had been reported, but not verified, during the previous year 80,000 new refugees had arrived in Pakistan from Afghanistan and five new camps had had to be opened. The Government of Pakistan would need an additional amount of $9 million in order to assist those refugees. Further, the transport fleet assigned for relief operations was now more than 10 years old and donor countries should consider replacing 381 trucks, 150 utility vehicles, 20 logistic support vehicles and 250 motorcycles. Pakistan would also need some $25 million in order to start the third phase of its income-generating project programme.

36. His Government fully supported United Nations efforts to encourage the return of Afghan refugees to their country. However, it did not support the idea of denying or reducing rations and cash resources for refugees in an attempt to force their repatriation. Large-scale voluntary repatriation could take place only when there was security of life and food in Afghanistan. Whereas spontaneous repatriation could pose certain difficulties in the current environment, it might nevertheless be tempted in certain cases, in a spirit of consensus; but as long as refugees were on the soil of Pakistan, it was the resonsibility of the asylum country, the United Nations system, bilateral donors and the international community at large to meet their needs.

37. The CHAIRMAN assured the representative of Pakistan that the international community and UNHCR were well aware that the presence of millions of refugees in Pakistan placed a tremendous burden on the country.

38. Mr. VARGA (Observer for Hungary) said that by acceding to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and thus establishing a close working relationship with UNHCR, Hungary had joined the international system established to provide protection for refugees.

39. Hungary had for many years given shelter to refugees from countries in Europe and from other parts of the world. However, that phenomenon had assumed much broader proportions since mid-1987 with the arrival of more

than 30,000 refugees from Romania. To cope with that situation, the Hungarian Government had set up an interministerial commission and a special fund for assistance to the refugees. It had organized temporary and permanent reception centres and a system of subsistence allowances and it had expedited the formalities for issuing work permits. Its basic policy was to integrate the majority of refugees into Hungarian society. Non-governmental organizations, churches and individuals were helping it to carry out that task. In the previous year, the Hungarian Government had worked closely with UNHCR and concluded a number of agreements with it.

40. In May 1989, UNHCR had appealed to the international community for $5.2 million on behalf of asylum-seekers and refugees in Hungary. Over half of that amount was to cover the cost of consolidating three admission centres and of medical screening and health services. The Hungarian Government was grateful to the international community for its positive assistance, and in particular to the Governments of the United Kingdom, France and Japan for their recent generous contributions.

41. Statistics in recent months reported, alarmingly, that the influx of refugees, far from tapering off, was increasing. In April 1990, over 800 new arrivals had been registered each week and, since March 1990, 5,500 asylum seekers had arrived in Hungary. The overwhelming majority were of Hungarian ethnic origin. They were unanimous in agreeing that the spirit of friendship that had prevailed in Transylvania during the events of December 1989 had degenerated into a chauvinistic hatred which had sparked off the tragic events recently in the town of Marosvasarhely (Tirgu Mures).

42. His Government considered that each individual had the inalienable right to live in his homeland, where fundamental rights and freedoms must be respected. It was a historical fact that problems of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities could not be solved by mass exodus. The rights of those minorities had to be respected. Hungary did not encourage anyone to leave his homeland. However, if continuing violations of fundamental rights generated refugees, Hungary would have no choice but to receive them. That was why the Hungarian Government hoped that the new democratically elected Romanian Government would be willing and able to remedy the injustices and improve the situation in accordance with its international obligations, so that minorities no longer had to leave the land of their birth.

43. Hungarian public opinion had always been generous to refugees and had spontaneously approved the Government's policy of assisting them. To enable it to continue that action, at a time when the country was entering a new era of democracy and liberty, but also one of serious economic and financial difficulties, the Hungarian Government, which already enjoyed the political and moral support of the international community, was hopeful that donor countries would respond positively to the appeal launched by UNHCR, particularly since their generosity could only strengthen the prestige of the Office of the High Commissioner and of the United Nations family as a whole, not only in Hungary but also in all the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

44. Mr. MONASTERIO (Observer for Mexico) said that the spirit of reconciliation that had prevailed at earlier sessions of the Executive Committee attested to the confidence which UNHCR inspired in Governments and international civil society.

45. While the long-term objective of the international community was the establishment of a climate conducive to preventing the emergence of new flows of refugees, in the short term, in order to maintain peace in the world, the problem of the 15 million currently registered refugees required a durable solution. In effect, there was ample proof that the suspension or postponement of refugee aid programmes aggravated the situation of the people in need of assistance and made only for false economies which resulted in wasted resources.

46. Apart from their indirect contribution, which was seldom quantified, the countries of asylum offered refugees something that was intangible but indispensable, namely, the protection without which no assistance would be possible. Mexico, which earmarked, indirectly, over $3 million every year to refugee assistance programmes on its territory, had recently enacted further measures of protection or integration. Thus, the Office of the Secretary of State for Public Education now gave full recognition to studies carried out in the settlement zones for Guatemalan refugees in the States of Quintana Roo, Campenche and Chiapas; the authorities responsible for migration questions had made an agreement with the Mexican Commission for Aid to Refugees and the UNHCR Office in Mexico for work permits to be issued to Guatemalan refugees in the State of Chiapas; moreover, the civil registry services had begun registering over 13,000 children of Guatemalan refugees who, having been born in Mexico, were entitled to Mexican nationality. Finally the Government would soon submit to the Congress of the Union a bill amending the general law on the population and conferring on refugees a status different from that of persons enjoying political asylum.

47. While it was clear that the peace in Central America was primarily the outcome of the efforts deployed by the countries of the region themselves, other initiatives had helped to introduce a climate conducive to slow but sure progress towards peace. One such initiative was the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) and it would be unfortunate if what was a historic undertaking could not be brought to a successful conclusion.

48. Mr. EIRIKSSON (Sweden) said that 10 per cent of the population of Central America had been uprooted by conflicts in recent decades. Since the holding, in May 1989, of the International Conference on Central American Refugees and the adoption of the Concerted Plan of Action for the region, a dialogue had begun among Governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and sponsors. Sweden looked forward to the participation and active support of many countries at the first international meeting of the Follow-up Committee to be held in New York on 27 and 28 June 1990.

49. Mr. NGO DINH KHA (Observer for Viet Nam) said that the question of the Indo-Chinese refugees was highly complex and called for concerted action, a collective commitment and a good deal of patience on the part of all the parties involved. It should be noted, however, that the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) adopted a year earlier in Geneva had been implemented thanks to combined efforts of the international community.

50. Viet Nam was doing everything it could to settle the refugee problem, which had posed a threat to its political, economic and social equilibrium. Aware of the difficulties confronting first-asylum countries and of its responsibilities as a country of origin, it had endeavoured to check illegal departures by extending and expediting the Orderly Departures Programme,

thereby achieving a sharp reduction in the number of boat people arriving in first asylum countries since the start of 1990. The Vietnamese authorities who continued to be committed to the principle of voluntary repatriation and opposed to forcible repatriation, noted with satisfaction that the number of nationals who were returning voluntarily was increasing steadily. At the same time, following bilateral negotiations between Viet Nam and the countries concerned, an exercise to repatriate Vietnamese nationals who were not opposed to the idea of returning had been carried out on an experimental basis. All the returnees had been treated well and their reintegration in national society had been confirmed by the foreign observers and international officials on assignment in Viet Nam. Further, Viet Nam was in the process of reviewing its economic policy and undertaking structural reforms with a view to improving the living conditions of the entire population, thus contributing to the overall settlement of the problem of refugees and displaced persons.

51. However, Viet Nam could not resolve the problem rapidly on its own. His delegation therefore appealed for international assistance and asked for an end to be made to the blockade against it and which, by compromising its development, was preventing it from settling the root cause of the problem of refugees and displaced persons.

52. Finally, on behalf of his Government, he thanked all countries and all international organizations as well as UNHCR staff, and in particular, the staff of the Regional Bureau for Asia and Oceania, for their assistance and co-operation in implementing the Comprehensive Plan of Action.

53. Mr. D'ALOTTO (Argentina) said that although his country did not belong to the group of donor countries because of the severe financial crisis it was experiencing and although it did not have a very large number of refugees, it nevertheless fully associated itself with the humanitarian cause defended by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and with the principle of international co-operation in that field. Its position was rooted in the legal and humanitarian tradition of the American continent, which had always been a region of asylum, and by the recent past of Argentina, many of whose nationals had experienced the unenviable fate of becoming refugees, and as such of receiving protection and assistance from the Office of the High Commissioner.

54. The document on major developments in UNHCR activities between January and May 1990 (A/AC.96/ES/CRP.1) indicated that, as a result of the process of democratization, the Latin American region had advanced in recent years towards a solution of the problem of its refugees; that development would make it possible to earmark more resources in the future for programmes intended for refugees in other regions. However, Latin America was experiencing many problems, particularly economic ones, and the international community must remain alert. In particular, the current structures for the international protection of refugees should not be called into question.

55. His Government had supported the holding of the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) and had followed its work with interest. In its view, the success of that initiative which aimed at finding durable solutions to the refugee problem was a prerequisite for the maintenance of democracy and peace in the region. His delegation would like to have more

details, one year after the International Conference held in Guatemala, on the repercussions that CIREFCA had thus far had on the situation of refugees as well as on the financial support that UNHCR and the countries that organized the Conference still hoped to secure.

56. His Government also attached a great deal of importance to the activities conducted by UNHCR with a view to the voluntary demobilization, repatriation or resettlment of the members of what was known as the Nicaraguan resistance in the context of the International Support and Verification Commission (CIAV) and it welcomed the return of nearly 7,000 Salvadorian refugees. He would like to have more information about the efforts being made by UNHCR to pave the way for repatriation of the large number of Chilean refugees in Argentina to a country now led by a democratically elected Government.

57. Deeply attached to the principle of protection of refugees and respect for their fundamental rights, his Government had recently promulgated a decree prohibiting the extradition of refugees to any country where they had a well-founded fear of persecution. Noting with concern that the principle of non-refoulement was not always respected, his delegation awaited with interest the meeting of the Working Group on International Protection, established at the previous session of the Executive Committee.

58. Mr. AMANI (Observer for Afghanistan) thanked, on behalf of his Government, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for agreeing to visit Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to study the situation of the Afghan refugees.

59. His delegation stressed the fact that it would be fairly simple to resolve the problem of the repatriation of Afghan refugees if countries of asylum showed goodwill. In the period between 15 February 1989 and 8 March 1990, when the last Soviet soldiers had left Afghanistan, an unprecedented wave of departures was getting under way in the camps in Peshawar. However, as that movement was contrary to the political and financial interests of certain parties, hostilities had resumed at Jalalabad and rockets had bombarded the main towns, including Kabul. That situation had done more than suspend the repatriation operations: it had compelled the inhabitants to flee.

60. Increased financial and material assistance to asylum countries was not the answer to the difficulties of the Afghan refugees. The obstacles preventing the voluntary repatriation of the persons concerned should also be removed. The establishment of joint commissions as prescribed in article 4 of the bilateral agreement between the Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the voluntary return of refugees and, more generally, full and sincere respect for and implementation of the Geneva Agreements would be a decisive step towards the solution of the problem of the Afghan refugees.

61. Mr. MIGUIL (Obsever for Djibouti) said that he hoped that the current extraordinary session would allow the Executive Committee to resolve the problems confronting his country, mainly due to the presence of refugees and displaced persons on its territory. An island of peace in the Horn of Africa, since acceding to independence, Djibouti had admitted 40,000 Ethiopian refugees, accounting for 10 per cent of its national population. Subsequently, 28,500 of them had fortunately been able to

return to their homeland and a further 10,000 had been resettled in a third country. The presence of the remaining 1,500 refugees in Djibouti was no longer warranted and they should have access to resettlement programmes.

62. Further, the war that had broken out in the north of Somalia in May 1988 had made it necessary for Djibouti to admit, on humanitarian grounds, thousands of women, old persons and children. In July 1989, at the OAU summit, the President of the Republic of Djibouti had asked the former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for food aid for the 30,000 Somalis who had been accommodated in the capital. However, none of the representations made to UNHCR and to the World Food Programme had been successful despite the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/44/137 adopted in December 1989 and the simliarity in the situation of those refugees and those who had found asylum in Ethiopia.

63. It was impossible for Djibouti to grant refugee status to the Somali nationals or to establish refugee camps because of the smallness of the national territory, the total absence of resources and the social and economic problems confronting its population because of the international economic crisis. However, out of respect for the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1961 Protocol signed upon its accession to independence, Djibouti would not carry out any measures of refoulement or exert any pressure on displaced persons until stability was restored in their region of origin. Having said that, it was high time for the international community to shoulder its responsibilities by granting Djibouti the assistance it had requested. The food and medical situation was deteriorating very sharply in the country. It was therefore important to back up the Government of Djibouti's assistance efforts by providing food, medical and material assistance to the displaced persons located on its territory and by strengthening the hand of the governmental agencies in charge of assistance to refugees and displaced persons.

64. Mr. CESKA (Austria) said that he wished to underscore the importance and usefulness of the informal consultations between UNHCR and a number of countries on asylum seekers in Europe and North America.

65. The Foreign Minister of Austria had recently proposed that a Ministerial Conference on migratory movements between East and West should be convened in Vienna in January 1991. That proposal, which was supported inter alia by the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, had been accepted at the latest meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The Conference would be attended by Foreign Ministers and Ministers responsible for refugee and migration policy of the member States of the Council of Europe. Central and Eastern European countries which had applied for membership of the Council, traditional immigration countries as well as UNHCR and the International Organization on Migration (IMO) would be invited to attend as observers. The Preparatory Committee for the Conference would have its first meeting in Strasbourg on 26 June 1990.

66. Mr. ZHANG YICHAN (China) noted that document A/AC.90/ES/CRP.1 indicated that UNHCR and the international community had made considerable efforts in the early months of 1990 to protect and assist refugees. Thus, in Africa and Latin America, approximately 100,000 refugees had been repatriated and the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees had been implemented. To simplify refugee protection, UNHCR had forwarded questionnaires to States

parties to evaluate the implementation of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and other parties had indicated their intention of acceding to that instrument. That progress was particularly commendable at a time when UNHCR had confronted financial difficulties.

67. Such a positive balance sheet should not, however, conceal the seriousness of the refugee situation. The well-being, indeed the survival, of 15 million refugees depended on international aid.

68. Most of the refugees registered throughout the world were located in the developing countries, with Africa hosting more than half of them. Over the last decade, three international conferences had been held to review the problems of African refugees and it was to be hoped that UNHCR would be able to take specific measures to supervise the implementation of the activity programmes planned for them.

69. With regard to the 5 million Afghan refugees, the host countries were making tremendous sacrifices in order to secure their protection and, on its side, UNHCR was making arrangements to organize their voluntary repatriation.

70. He noted that, by and large, the situation of the Indo-Chinese refugees had improved, that arrivals of refugees had tapered off and that the number of people who had returned to their country had increased. The major problem continued to be the status of Vietnamese asylum seekers and their return; no consensus had yet been reached in that regard. Like most of the members of the Executive Committee, his delegation would like the repatriation of non-refugees to begin as soon as possible. Viet Nam must discharge its obligations vis-à-vis the international community.

71. Finally, with regard to the protection of refugees, it would be useful for the working group on protection and solutions to submit a report on the issue to the Executive Committee at its forty-first session.

72. Mr. SIRELKHATIM (Sudan) thanked the international community for the assistance it had rendered to his country and to other African countries following the drought. He expressed the hope that, in order to avert loss of life and mass exodus, the resources needed would be distributed in good time. His Government was co-operating with UNHCR to forestall the possible consequences of food shortages.

73. In the paper on major developments in UNHCR activities (A/AC.96/ES/CRP.1), the High Commissioner had neglected to mention that there had recently been a further inflow of refugees into Sudan and that it was continuing; 26,902 refugees had arrived between October 1989 and May 1990. The lack of additional appropriations had made it necessary, in order to be able to assist the new refugees, to draw heavily on the budget of the assistance programme for refugees already in the country; the implementation of that programme was therefore in jeopardy. He appealed for additional assistance to be provided for the new refugees.

74. Mr. SAFAEE (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the shortfall in UNHCR resources had made it necessary for his country, over the past two years, to draw increasingly on its own resources in order to fund the assistance programme for refugees on its territory. While voluntary repatriation should be encouraged, assistance should continue to be provided to the refugees without exerting pressure on them to return to their countries of origin.

75. During the first half of 1990, the Islamic Republic of Iran had received new refugees on its eastern and western borders and its Government welcomed the decision taken by UNHCR to dispatch a mission to look into the new arrivals coming from the west.

76. The special programme for the rehabilitation of rangelands in the province of South Khorasan, the preparation of which had called for numerous preparatory studies and which comprised various components aiming ultimately at preparing for the repatriation of the refugees, had still not been implemented. The situation was extremely regrettable and if it were to continue, it would undermine the credibility of UNHCR which had finalized the programme with Iran and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

77. Mr. CHIRILA (Observer for Romania) took note with satisfaction of the strategy which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees intended to apply in the future.

78. UNHCR had been one of the first international agencies to make contact with the Romanian authorities after the revolution of December 1989, dispatching a mission of solidarity and co-operation to Romania in January 1990. The Romanian Government was ready to continue and to intensify the dialogue and co-operation with the Office of the High Commissioner, endeavouring to find constructive solution to any problems that might arise.

79. Romania was engaged in a process of political democratization based on a multi-party system and liberalization of the economy; that process had been strengthened by the results of the first free elections organized in Romania for over 50 years.

80. He thought it might be useful to recall, in the context of the deliberations of the Executive Committee's extraordinary session, that in a recent statement the Romanian Government, recognizing the fundamental right of every individual to choose the country in which he wished to live, had undertaken to take a benevolent attitude towards Romanians who, for political, economic, ethnic or other reasons, had emigrated, possibly taking another nationality; it had undertaken to propose the adoption of legislation conferring Romanian nationality on all those who were Romanian by birth and guaranteeing to all Romanian nationals residing abroad the free exercise of their civic rights on the national territory. Aware that Romanians who had left still had roots in the country, it had also indicated a wish to promote humanitarian, economic and cultural links with expatriates to enable them to remain in close contact with their town or community.

81. The statement had been preceded by important measures including the abolition of the obligation to apply for an entry visa for Romania and recognition of a number of fundamental rights, including the right to move freely and to select one's residence on the national territory, the right to leave the country and to return freely and the right to a passport enjoyed by all citizens, including the members of national, ethnic or religious minorities.

82. His delegation noted with satisfaction that by and large participants at the extraordinary session of the Executive Committee had taken a strictly humanitarian approach to the refugee question, refraining from politicizing the discussions. That being the case, he found it difficult to understand the

politically motivated comments which the observer for Hungary had seem fit to make concerning the situation in Romania. Any problems between Hungary and Romania should be settled by consultations between the two Governments. There was no linkage between the events that had occurred in March in Transylvania and the arrival of persons of Romanian nationality in Hungary, particularly since that movement in no way resembled a mass exodus. The rights of the Hungarian minority in Romania were respected; at the recent elections, the parties representing that minority had won 48 seats in Parliament.

83. In conclusion, he reaffirmed that his country was ready to continue its co-operation with UNHCR.

84. Mr. de RIEDMATTAN (Switzerland) said that his Government was committed to the process of intergovernmental consultations on asylum seekers in Europe and North America and would like UNHCR to continue to play an active role in the consultations since it believed that they offered a framework for deliberations and exchanges of information vital at a time when Europe was experiencing inflow of asylum seekers. His delegation was also very interested in the work of the working group on protection and solutions and intended to participate in it.

85. Mr. DAYAL (Observer for India), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, categorically rejected the statement by the representative of Pakistan alleging that refugees from the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir had recently arrived in Pakistan. While there had been no such influx in that direction, there had in fact been an influx of terrorists into the State of Jammu and Kashmir across the international border and the line of control. The Indian authorities had repeatedly urged the Government of Pakistan to prevent such inflitrations, as was its responsibility.

86. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, challenged the statements by the Observer for India which, in his opinion, were groundless. The Prime Minister of Pakistan had proposed that a neutral international agency should send a mission at first hand to establish the facts, but the Indian Government had never agreed to that proposal. Journalists from all over the world had been able to see for themselves that there had been no intereference by Pakistan. The rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, including their right to self-determination, must be recognized. He therefore suggested that UNHCR observers should be dispatched to carry out investigations on both sides of the line of control.

87. Mr. DAYAL (Observer for India) said that he would refrain from exercising his right of reply for a second time as he did not wish to discuss bilateral and strictly internal matters in the Executive Committee. The differences between Pakistan and India could be addressed only in the context of bilateral negotiations, as both countries had in effect expressly recognized in the Simla Agreement.

88. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, noted that the Observer for India had passed over his proposal to dispatch a UNHCR mission of inquiry on the spot in silence and expressed surprise that he had described events in Jammu and Kashmir as an internal matter.

89. Like Prime Minister Nehru in 1947, the United Nations General Assembly had stated in many resolutions that the people of Jammu and Kashmir should be able to choose their destiny freely. Moreover, in the 1972 Simla Agreement, India and Pakistan had recognized the existence of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir and the need to resolve it by peaceful means. If UNHCR and the international community were to be informed of all refugee movements, they were also entitled to be informed of their root causes.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Extraordinary session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 452nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 30 May 1990, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. DANNENBRING (Federal Republic of Germany)

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Review of major developments concerning refugees in 1990 (continued)

Any other business

Closing of the session

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

REVIEW OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING REFUGEES IN 1990 (A/AC.96/ES/CRP.1) (continued)

1. Mr. BRANDRUP (International Council of Voluntary Agencies) said that non-governmental organizations working in the field of humanitarian assistance were frequently the closest operational partners of UNHCR and were concerned that its serious financial difficulties might be indicative of a deeper crisis within the international community on the matter of respecting and upholding the humanitarian principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, more specifically, of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. While they applauded the discussions on new approaches to the refugee problem including addressing root causes, early warning, preventive action and a new division of responsibility within the United Nations system, such approaches would not alleviate the immediate and growing suffering of millions of people. Additional resources were urgently required even as the international community's response to the phenomenon of involuntary migration was being rationalized. Traditional donor Governments must therefore demonstrate that they still subscribed, in deeds as well as in words, to the humanitarian principles which their countries had always advocated in the past.

2. Voluntary agencies agreed with the High Commissioner's emphasis, from the outset of his mandate, on the fact that protection of refugees was the main element of his activities. In that regard, the granting of asylum and recognition of refugee status were a precondition for upholding human rights principles.

3. The non-governmental organization community welcomed the greater involvement of UNHCR in some of the policy-making forums of the European institutions. The European non-governmental organizations working under the auspices of the European Consultation on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) had long expressed the opinion that the exclusion of UNHCR from that process was contrary to article 35 of the 1951 Convention. They urged UNHCR and all members of the Executive Committee to ensure that regular consultation took place in the coming months, when fundamental decisions relating to asylum policy in Europe were being made by European Governments. They supported those who wished to move the discussion away from ever more ingenious measures of deterrence and procedures at the frontiers which effectively prevented asylum-seekers from filing their applications, and towards a comprehensive set of policies rooted in adherence to human rights standards. They believed that the complex measures required to address the long-term implications of migration could be developed only if the international community was far more active in attacking the causes of human rights violations and the many factors that forced people from their homes. In addition, European Governments needed to take measures to improve the way in which they dealt with asylum claims. The current discussions on fair and efficient procedures were a key test in that regard.

4. In Central and Eastern Europe, while the numbers of refugees fleeing persecution for their political views had declined dramatically as more open and democratic societies had been established, age-old ethnic and religious conflicts had become a prime cause for the movement of hundreds of thousands of people in the past few years.

5. In Central America, as elsewhere, UNHCR had the responsibility to ensure that refugees contemplating return had access to the information necessary about conditions in their communities of origin in order to make informed decisions, and to monitor the safety of returnees in those communities. It was a cause for serious concern that persons returning to El Salvador, some as early as 1987, had still not received official documentation. It was also important that UNHCR strengthen its protection activities and be given the possibility to implement them more systematically, particularly in El Salvador, in order to prevent incidents such as that which had taken place in February 1990 in the Corral Piedra settlement in Chalatenango. Close consultation between UNHCR and NGOs was essential to ensure the safety of the returnees. His organization urged donor Governments to adhere to the financial and political commitments made at CIREFCA and attach importance to the First International Meeting of the Follow-up Committee.

6. In South America, the transition to civilian government in Chile meant that many Chilean refugees were considering return. Such efforts should be encouraged and supported.

7. With regard to South-East Asia, the situation in the detention centres in Hong Kong was most alarming. Families were being held in long-term incarceration in prison-like conditions, and his organization was most concerned that the needs of more than 10,000 children were being ignored and that their mental, physical and intellectual development would be adversely affected by those conditions. It called on UNHCR to concentrate on the question of fair screening. The international community should provide the Office with the necessary resources to ensure that screening was carried out within reasonable periods of time and that no bona fide refugees fell through its safety net. It was feared that recognized refugees would be sent to a camp in the Philippines once again to await an uncertain length of time in a closed camp. Clearly, immediate permanent resettlement opportunities were the only viable solutions for those refugees.

8. His organization was concerned by signals that there were attempts to push for premature repatriation of refugees to Afghanistan. The temporary absence of large-scale conflict in the so-called "zones of tranquility" did not offer guarantees for the safety of returnees.

9. There was no doubt that it was becoming more and more difficult for UNHCR to ensure that all food aid requirements for refugees were met. Part of the problem stemmed from the cuts to UNHCR's budget, but another aspect related to the fact that food aid supplies were falling short of emergency and refugee needs, and resulted in serious malnutrition among the aged, women and children. Clearly, more sharing of information was necessary between donors such as WFP, the European Community and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, if the latter were to respond to refugee needs more adequately, UNHCR would have to involve them on the spot more actively than in the past.

10. His organization urged UNHCR to share with non-governmental organizations information on evaluation of the impact of programmes with regard to women and children, as well as demographic, anthropological and socio-economic data, including gender roles and responsibilities. Participation by non-governmental organizations in UNHCR's gender awareness training courses, particularly in the field, should be invited. There was a close relationship between UNHCR's ability to provide assistance and protection to refugee women

and the number of women staff. Efforts should be made to increase the percentage of women in decision-making positions at headquarters as well as at the field level, particularly in protection.

11. UNHCR's capacity to provide timely and reliable information was essential to NGO efforts to mobilize support. The proposed cutting of information budgets would be a false economy. His organization was encouraged by the High Commission's efforts in recent months, in particular through the NGO Liaison Unit, to foster greater dialogue with non-governmental organizations. It hoped that in the future such mechanisms for dialogue and consultation could become more effective in improving service to refugees. In conclusion, his organization wished to reaffirm that non-governmental organizations concerned with the protection and assistance of asylum-seekers and refugees pledged to continue their co-operation with the High Commissioner, both at UNHCR Headquarters and in the field, and with all Governments upholding the principles of refugee protection.

12. The CHAIRMAN invited the heads of UNHCR's regional bureaux to respond to comments made by delegations during the consideration of major developments in 1990.

13. Mr. KPENOU (Head, Regional Bureau for Africa) first of all wished to point out that the reference in paragraph 13 of the conference room paper on major developments in UNHCR activities (A/AC.96/ES/CRP.1) to morbidity and mortality rates being within the norms for the African region should be deleted.

14. Turning to the comments made earlier in the session on developments relating to Africa, he exprerssed UNHCR's deep appreciation for the active co-operation of the Governments of Angola and Zaire in the twin repatriation operation which had permitted the return home of all the Zairians wishing to be repatriated, as well as the return of some 6,500 Angolans. It was regrettable that the exercise had had to be suspended, mainly as a result of lack of funding. Nevertheless, it was encouraging to note that those resettled in their home provinces would be self-sufficient as from April 1991. The two Governments could remain assured that the operation would resume as soon as possible under the same conditions as before.

15. With regard to the statement made by the observer delegation of Namibia, whose presence he warmly welcomed, he wished to express appreciation for the concern shown by that country for the plight of refugees, whose situation would be aided by Namibia's accession to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Practical implementation of those instruments was evidenced by the appointment of a Director for Refugees within the Ministry of the Interior. Due note had been taken of the representative's observations regarding UNHCR's activities in Namibia. With regard to new arrivals, UNHCR was awaiting a comprehensive inter-agency mission project submission.

16. Turning to the remarks made by the representative of Djibouti, he wished to express profound gratitude for the Government's active co-operation with UNHCR and its generous hospitality towards refugees. UNHCR and WFP were in the process of mobilizing the resources necessary to aid the refugees in the border region.

17. Mr. AMUNATEGUI (Head, Regional Bureau for South-West Asia, North Africa and the Middle East) said that he would confine his remarks to the question of Afghan refugees, which was the main concern raised with respect to the

region. He wished to place on record UNHCR's appreciation for the hospitality given to the region's largest refugee case-load by the Governments of Pakistan and Iran and for their important contributions to refugee programmes. Account should also be taken of the tremendous impact which the refugee problem was having on their economic and social structures as well as on the environment.

18. The High Commissioner, accompanied by the Co-ordinator for United Nations Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes Relating to Afghanistan and the Executive Director of WFP, had visited Pakistan at the end of March 1990. That inter-agency mission symbolized the determination of the United Nations system to achieve the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees. The major outcome of the mission had been an agreement to promote more actively the voluntary repatriation of those refugees by providing incentives both inside Afghanistan, in those areas where physical and economic security permitted repatriation, and in the asylum countries for those genuinely wishing to return on a voluntary basis. The High Commissioner was convinced that if significant numbers returned within a reasonable period of time, funds would become available from the international community to assist further in that process. In that connection, he wished to assure the Executive Committee that if there had been any reduction in the programme in Pakistan and Iran, it was attributable solely to the general financial crisis of UNHCR and not to any attempt to force refugees to go back to their country against their wishes: UNHCR was bound by its mandate to respect and ensure the voluntary character of any return.

19. UNHCR welcomed the repatriations which had already taken place in 1989 - an estimated 100,000 from Pakistan and Iran - and the new upward trend in returns since January 1990, at a rate of 100 to 150 families per day, many going back from Baluchistan to Kandahar and Helmand. UNHCR was grateful to both Governments for facilitating those returns.

20. The 80,000 new arrivals in Pakistan during 1989 were being assisted both by the Government of Pakistan and by the international community. UNHCR was providing tents, water supply, education and medicines. Non-governmental organizations were continuing to make a major contribution in terms of food, health care and water. A recent UNHCR/WFP mission in Pakistan to assess the food needs of the Afghan refugees in 1991 had recommended that the 80,000 new refugees should be included in the normal food assistance programme being co-ordinated by WFP.

21. With regard to the question of the fleet of vehicles raised by the representative of Pakistan, he wished to point out that UNHCR was well aware of the age of that fleet. It had supported the Pakistan Government's request for funds to replace the fleet at a World Bank meeting the previous month in Paris, and had also approached a number of donors to help in that matter.

22. The High Commissioner had approved the third phase of the World Bank/UNHCR Income-Generating Project for Refugee Areas in Pakistan and had launched appeals to a number of donors. Discussions were currently taking place between UNHCR and the World Bank to work out the necessary arrangements for the third phase in consultation with the donor community. Lastly, he wished to reiterate UNHCR's commitment to seek alternative sources of funding for the IFAD project in Iran.

23. Mr. FRANCO (Head, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean) observed that a number of representatives had referred to the positive momentum gained in dealing with the refugee situations in the region against the background of progress in the search for peace in Central America and the return to democracy throughout Latin America. That momentum was demonstrated in particular by the fact that by early March all the refugees in the Colomoncagua camp in Western Honduras, a symbol of the consistently intractable refugee situation in Central America during the 1980s, had been voluntarily repatriated.

24. Notwithstanding such encouraging developments, it was essential - as several representatives had pointed out - for UNHCR to remain vigilant. He took note of the comments made earlier by the representative of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies that the Office had a responsibility to monitor the safety of the returnees in their communities of origin. It would, indeed, be wrong to assume that implementation of the durable solution, repatriation, meant that the difficulties faced by the refugees were over. On the contrary, they often found themselves on their return in a situation of desperate poverty. Support from the international community to deal with that human problem remained necessary. He could assure the non-governmental organizations involved that UNHCR would co-operate closely with them to ensure the safety and promote the reintegration of returnees in their home countries.

25. Many representatives had likewise referred to the positive trends in the CIREFCA process. UNHCR was very encouraged by the progress made in the year following the Conference. All the seven affected countries of the region had created national follow-up bodies involving all their main ministries, and not just those departments dealing with refugee operations. Furthermore, they had created support groups as forums for consultation and the sharing of views with donors and non-governmental organizations. For its part, UNHCR had established closer co-operation with UNDP, in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Executive Committee. Lastly, he wished to emphasize that many countries saw CIREFCA as not only a way of solving the problems of Central American uprooted persons but as part of the search for peace in the region. That question of linkage was on the political agenda of the Central American Governments, which hoped that the international community would announce concrete support for the projects elaborated within the framework of CIREFCA at the First International Meeting of the Follow-up Committee to be held in New York in June 1990.

26. Mr. YIEIRA DE MELLO (Head, Regional Bureau for Asia and Oceania) thanked the International Council of Voluntary Agencies for its support in the region and in Hong Kong in particular. The position of the UNHCR on the conditions in the detention camps in Hong Kong was well known and in the broad context of the detention policy adopted by the Government of Hong Kong, the Office with NGO support was doing its best to improve conditions in those camps and assist the refugees, especially the children. It was, however an exaggeration to say that 10,000 children were ignored but it was true that their prolonged stay in the camps would have unfortunate psychological, intellectual and social consequences. He assured the ICVA representative, who had expressed concern that persons who were granted refugee status could be transferred to a camp in the Philippines and that the camps in that country were the best in the region.

27. With respect to the statements on the Indo-Chinese refugees and more particularly the Vietnamese boat people, he thanked those delegations which expressed their support for the Office and their recognition of the progress made since the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees in Geneva. The information campaign had led to a decline in arrivals particularly in Hong Kong. Arrivals in other countries had not been as significantly reduced in some cases and had increased dramatically in countries such as Indonesia and Thailand. Considerable progress had been made in the orderly departure programme and related bilateral programme. In 1989, record figures had been reached and in 1990, the figures were expected to exceed 60,000 departures. The principle of first asylum had been restored in the region and status determination had been started. The Governments, together with the UNHCR, under the Comprehensive Plan of Action had made considerable efforts to meet their commitments and the results, on the whole, had been encouraging. Resettlement had been very successful to date and far exceeded the optimistic targets set at the international conference the previous year. In respect of voluntary repatriation, especially from Hong Kong, considerable progress had been made and some 2,400 persons had returned to Viet Nam.

28. However, as the High Commissioner had said, some delicate and unresolved problems still remained. At the informal meeting of the Steering Committee held in Manila, 26 Governments and 2 intergovernmental organizations had agreed that there remained a problem of denial of asylum and re-direction and also unresolved fundamental issues which endangered the integrity and survival of the Comprehensive Plan of Action. The long-term viability of the Comprehensive Plan of Action would be determined very much by the extent to which the problems of persons who had not been accorded refugee status were solved and he felt that the issue had to be addressed as a priority matter at the next formal meeting of the Steering Committee. The UNHCR had also been requested by the Steering Committee to bring the gravity of the situation to the attention of the Governments, especially those primarily concerned. UNHCR would try to address those remaining fundamental issues so that the Steering Committee could resolve them at its next meeting.

29. He stressed that UNHCR alone could not resolve difficulties that had essentially arisen between States and that, consequently, the support of those States and of all members of the Executive Committee was essential to avoid an impending tragedy on the high seas.

30. Ms. CAPPELLI (Head, Regional Bureau for Europe and North America) said that the Office would do everything possible within its human and financial resources to provide the assistance requested by the newly emerging democracies in eastern Europe. However, tensions were still manifesting themselves within the democratization and liberalization process and the challenge in coming years would be to ensure that the refugees who had fled persecution based on ideology would not be replaced by others fleeing civil disturbance and inter-communal conflict or even international hostilities. The need to establish a durable and peaceful basis for international co-existence was far beyond the competence of UNHCR; it must be resolved in bilateral and regional forums, which might have to be created if existing ones did not prove adequate. Nevertheless, the Office would offer its advice and experience and provide whatever assistance was requested by Governments.

31. She emphasized, in that connection, the importance of the commitment expressed during the debate by certain countries, concerning the enforcement of respect for basic human rights and thereby eliminating the root cause of refugee outflows.

32. Mr. ARNAOUT (Director, Division of Refugee Law and Doctrine) said that several delegations had raised the important question of protection and durable solutions. The delegation of China had stressed that since the problem of the budgetary and financial problem had been settled, the international community should turn its attention to the question of international protection. Thanks especially to the generosity of the Australian Government, a preliminary meeting had been held in San Remo to discuss the question in the Executive Committee; it had unanimously agreed that the question should be frankly discussed within a working group specially convened for the purpose. An action plan had been prepared and he suggested that a preliminary meeting should be held in Geneva in the month of January to discuss procedure. The Office would submit two documents on causes and prevention to that meeting. He suggested that another meeting should be convened in September of a working group to be attended by all members of the Executive Committee.

33. Given the changes in the world today, new approaches would be needed to the problem of refugees. On the basis of the principle that any UNHCR protection of refugees should be based on human rights, the Office had envisaged the problem of refugees from a global perspective, which included the responsibility of the country of origin, development assistance and voluntary return. The task was a lengthy, complex and difficult one but it would be the best way to consolidate international protection and enable the international community to arrive at a consensus on common values and the Office to proceed realistically.

34. Mrs. RUESTA DE FURTER (Venezuela) endorsed the comments on protection by Mr. Arnaout. However, Venezuela attached great importance to the assistance aspects of UNHCR's work and suggested that the time was perhaps ripe for systematizing all the valuable knowledge it had acquired. The exercise proposed by Mr. Arnaout should perhaps focus on the socio-legal values that applied to the overall refugee problem.

35. Mr. ARNAOUT (Director, Division of Refugee Law and Doctrine) said that two important concepts had emerged from the San Remo meeting: the responsibility of the country of origin and its corollary, development aid. In his view, the consensus did not merely concern legal aspects but refugee protection as a whole. In order to carry out that complex and demanding task, the emphasis had initially been placed on the two fundamental factors which were prevention and causes, although the vital importance of legal aspects would not be disregarded.

36. The CHAIRMAN said that the Executive Committee had concluded its consideration of agenda item 6.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (agenda item 7)

37. The CHAIRMAN said that the Governments of the German Democratic Republic, India, Iraq, Spain and the Syrian Arab Republic had applied for observer status in the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International Protection and the

Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Executive Committee agreed that those countries should have observer status in the two Sub-Committees.

38. It was so decided.

39. The CHAIRMAN said that the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Chaalal had been recalled to Algeria on special assignment and that a new Vice-Chairman would have to be elected. Time did not allow for an election to be held at such short notice and a special meeting of the Executive Committee would have to be convened as soon as possible. He suggested that the meeting should be held in Geneva at the end of June or early in July 1990 and that a list of candidates and a proposed date for the meeting should be circulated in due course.

40. It was so decided.

CLOSING OF THE SESSION (agenda item 8)

41. Mr. STOLTENBERG (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that although all had agreed on the need for streamlining and for effective and clear decision-making within UNHCR, a word of caution was necessary, as the task that had just begun meant that the Office would have to do a better job with less resources. Day-by-day decisions would have to be taken that might affect projects or individuals that were of importance to members. He urged members not to hesitate to raise with him the concrete problems that would inevitably arise in the following months and emphasized the essential importance of co-operation in order to implement the measures decided upon.

42. He thanked all those involved in the Temporary Working Group and in the preparation of the meeting and expressed the hope that he would never be forced to conclude that it was too late to meet the needs of refugees. The spirit that had emerged from the extraordinary session should allow UNHCR to fulfil the expectations and hopes to which the end of the cold war had given birth. Refugee issues had to be placed on the political agenda, so as to ensure no new confrontation dashed those hopes, as the cold war had dashed the hopes and expectations of 1945.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that the meeting had been extraordinary in many respects: in respect of the circumstances and developments in the world-wide refugee situation and the critical time at which the High Commissioner and his Deputy, had assumed office; it had been extraordinary for the staff and delegates, who had worked extremely hard over six months to prepare the meeting; it had been extraordinary in terms of the results it had achieved, which clearly showed the support of the international community for the Office of the High Commissioner; it had been extraordinary in that it had reached constructive results through consensus, and the spirit of compromise that had marked the Temporary Working Group had prevailed throughout the meeting and facilitated the discussion of difficult budgetary issues. The adoption of the report of the Temporary Working Group would allow UNHCR to take the realistic financial decisions required in order to allow UNHCR to continue working on a stable basis.

44. Those satisfactory results were no reason for complacency, although they made it possible to face the future with greater confidence. The hard work ahead was foreshadowed by the report of the Temporary Working Group, which had

provided, in particular, that the Sub-Committee on Financial and Administrative Matters should follow up its recommendations, a task in which naturally all members would be given the fullest opportunity of participating. An important conceptual and policy planning task lay ahead and he repeated his conviction that the Working Group on Durable Protection and Solutions should be convened as soon as possible in view of the quantitative and qualitative developments taking place in the world refugee situation. He hoped that it would be able to present an interim report at the session of the Executive Committee in October 1990.

45. He declared the extraordinary session of the Executive Committee closed.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.